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PlayStation®

The Official Magazine

JUNE 09

PlayStation – The Official Magazine Issue 20 (June 2009)

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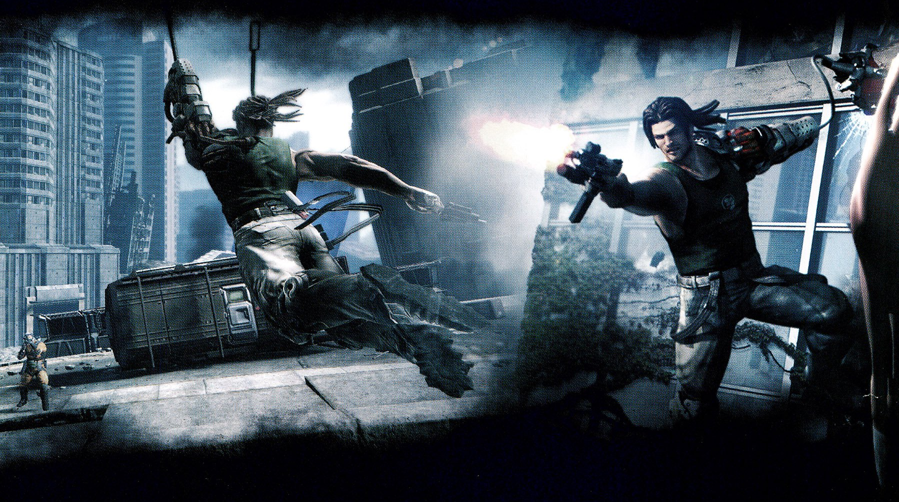

"...the sequel of a lifetime."
– Play

Games for Windows

XBOX 360

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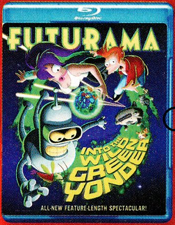
Blu-ray Disc
FUTURAMA
INTO THE WILD GREEN YONDER
ALL-NEW FEATURE-LENGTH SPECTACULAR!

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We go in-depth with the ultimate *Batman* game and take control of the Joker—playable only on the PS3!

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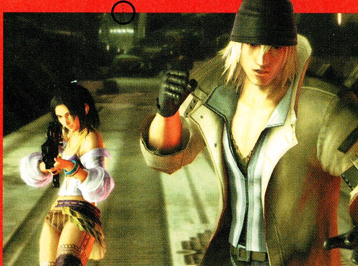
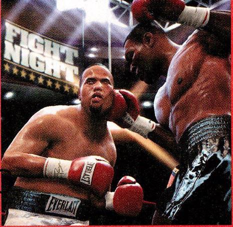
Hands-on with the PS3's next great RPG





52 seconds into the first round, Everlast realized the inherent irony in its sponsorship miscue.

"Tell our enemies that they may take our lives, but they'll never take... OUR FREEDOM!"

Really, who do you think has the best man-breasts: Mike Tyson, The Rock, or Ocelot?

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Editor's Note

"We will join as a family and strike back at the planet!"

Intriguing potential trend or fascinating "we won that race" one-off: Joker is a playable character only in the PS3 version of our cover game, *Batman: Arkham Asylum.* Platform exclusives aren't new, but aren't as common as I thought they might be. Sure, we got Vader in *Soulcalibur IV,* but did that fact make you a buyer or just say "okay, cool, thanks"? We still don't have downloadable content for *GTA IV* though that was obviously a planned deal involving very large sums of development money.

With Joker, we get to play with the single coolest villain in the DC universe, which we all think is a huge draw. What say you? *Batman: Arkham Asylum* was already looking like a very well put-together game when I was pulled aside at one demo and whispered the exciting news that's exclusive to PS3. In my mind, that instantly vaulted it into the top handful of games coming out this summer, and having seen and played with Joker at the developer's studio in England, I'm pretty sure I'm right!

That, of course, wasn't team PTOM's only globe-trotting trip this month. Teresa spent a few days chatting up the developers of *Final Fantasy XIII* in Japan. She brought back our first in-depth story on a game that's as high on that PS3 must-have list as any. In fact, the story is so detailed in covering her hands-on experience with the demo (that will only be released in Japan) that we turned the pages sideways to fit it all in! Of course, many cards are still being held incredibly tight to the dev team's collective chest that a little speculation was needed. Let me know what you think, and what you're expecting from Square's entire series of *Final Fantasy* PlayStation games to come.

> "In my mind, that instantly vaulted *[Batman]* into the top handful of games coming out this summer...and I'm pretty sure I'm right!"

And if that's not a great showcase for the stable of games heading to PS3 in the months ahead we sent Scott to scope out *BioShock 2.* Yes, *BioShock 2.* 2K Marin is now firmly settled with its development plans at full scale, and Scott returned giddier than his usual giddy self , as we're sure you will be when you read his report on page 52.

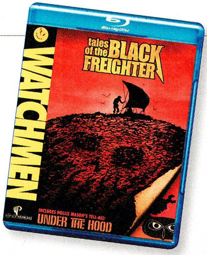
Also, let me know what you think of our new front-of-book section, The Ten. We're pursuing new, original stories (like the arguments for and against game trading), while giving some of our regulars, like the PTOM Interview, top billing. You can't miss our chat with designer Tim Schafer who's crafting *Brütal Legend* in his own image!

With that, keep your contest entries coming, and if you're out and about with your PSP at any place of interest, take a picture, and we'll print all the best.

Rob

"Quote" contest

Yes, the quote contest. This month I'll be curious to see how many entries I get? Will it be more than those of you who recognized last month's line from the movie *Slumdog Millionaire?* Rob DeMeulemeester of Clinton Twp, MI did and he's getting a Blu-ray movie from our library for his efforts. As usual, identify the movie quoted above, then send an email with the answer and your full mailing address to **PTOM_editor@futureus.com** with the words Ed Note June in the subject line.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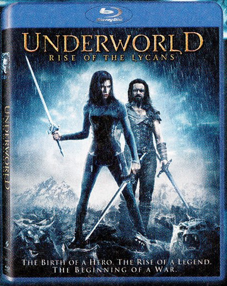

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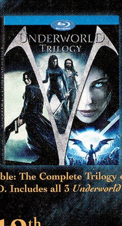

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LEGENDARY: TIM SCHAFER

Will *Brütal Legend* be the funniest videogame ever?

A huge fan of heavy metal, personable, a wry, sharp wit, the kind of guy you'd want to have a beer with knowing you'd leave at the end of a night with stories to tell your less cool friends. But are we talking about Ben from classic LucasArts PC adventure game *Full Throttle?* Or Eddie Riggs, the roadie hero of Double Fine Productions' *Brütal Legend?* Or Tim Schafer, the phenomenally gifted writer of the game, and founder of the studio? Or even Jack Black, the actor, comedian, musician star of the band Tenacious D and the movie *School of Rock* (among others) who provides the voice of Eddie Riggs in the game? All the above could fit that description, and it's in the Schafer/Black collaboration that we expect some of the richest, funniest, most creative scenes and dialogue that videogames can offer when *Brütal Legend* ships later this year. We snagged a few minutes with Schafer to get the official word on writing funny.

At a recent showing during the Game Developers Conference, the room of usually inscrutable press laughed at virtually every gag. Was that your expectation or just hope?

Tim Schafer: I was pleasantly surprised. We just crossed our fingers and hoped the feedback was good, because the most we usually get is reading forums, and that's mostly terrible. We thought it was funny, but by the time you've seen it over 100 times, you don't laugh any more. So it was great vindication and validation, and meant a lot.

Is the script finished?

We've finished most of the cinematic dialogue, and the drama and comedy and mission dialogue is done, but to add depth and realism, the characters talk during action sequences so you know who they are, who they like, whose side they're on. That's what I'm doing now.

Is it just hard to write funny?

It's a mystery to me why there aren't many games like that. Comedy is so mainstream, so it's got huge ability to draw people in to games. All it takes is for one game that's funny to be a huge hit and then there will be loads! But when you're making variants of *Medal of Honor*...that's just not funny.

Was Jack Black your first choice to voice Eddie?

It was a dream I didn't dare have. He definitely inspired the character of being an earnest music lover who could do heroic things. I was inspired by *School of Rock,* Tenacious D, and his general take on over-the-top metal. Then we found out he was a fan of *Psychonauts* so we got a meeting, he loved the designs, and signed on.

Does Tim Schafer want to be Jack Black?

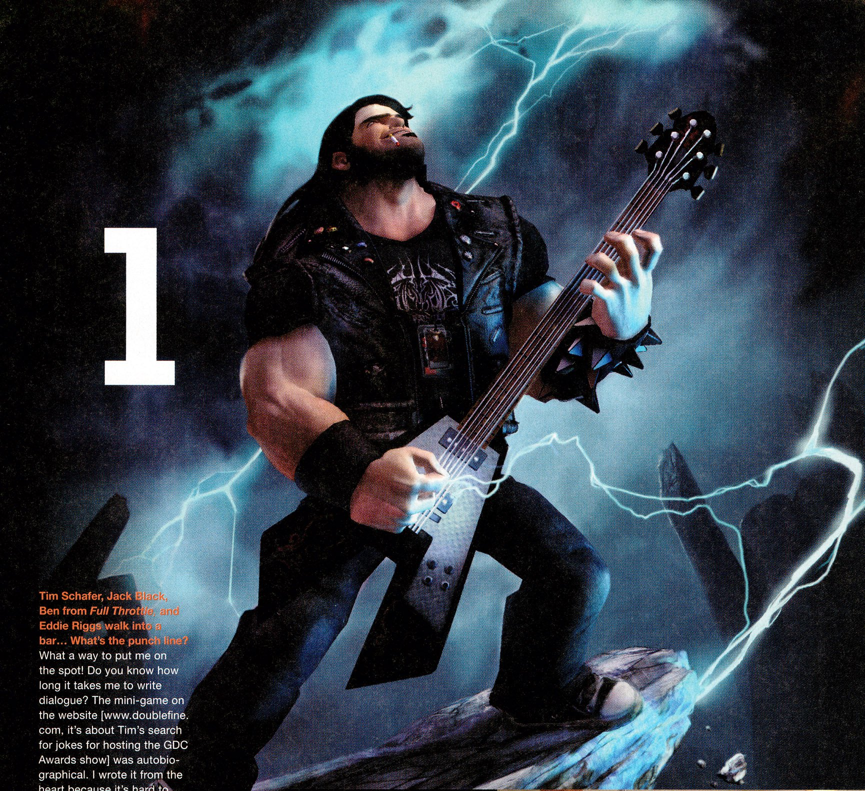
Ha! I'd love to be Jack Black, and have people think you're a cool guy to hang out with (which he is). He works longer hours than you'd imagine, and never seems to shy away from another take because he wants to do it right, and that's admirable.

Is *Brütal Legend* the spiritual successor to *Full Throttle?*

It definitely comes from the same part of my brain. I love hot rods, the road, tough guy characters that are stoic—they're all based on Yojimbo from Kurosawa's movies... guys who are super smart and say more with a scratch of the cheek than any line.

If you're the guy writing the funniest stuff in the games industry, who's second?

There are plenty: Eric Wolpaw, the guys that did *Katamari* (the writing for the king of the cosmos is great). Even when Clank becomes Giant Clank, that's some funny writing... and the guys at Telltale are doing comedy.



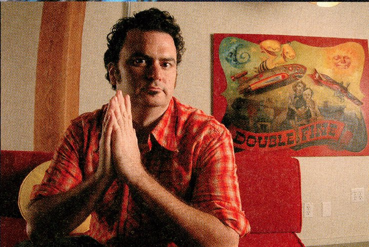
1

Tim Schafer, Jack Black, Ben from *Full Throttle*, and Eddie Riggs walk into a bar… What's the punch line?
What a way to put me on the spot! Do you know how long it takes me to write dialogue? The mini-game on the website [www.doublefine.com, it's about Tim's search for jokes for hosting the GDC Awards show] was autobiographical. I wrote it from the heart because it's hard to write jokes, so I questioned why I decided to host again. But you have to get help from other funny friends, and work on it again and again, and in the end rehearse and polish so it looks smooth and planned.

So when will we see a Tim Schafer-penned movie script?
Ha, actually we're talking about a movie…and Jack's interested, and I think *[Brütal Legend]* would make a great movie.

Tim Schafer 411

FOUNDER: Double Fine Productions
EDUCATION: Computer Science degree, UC Berkeley
KNOWN FOR: His work on the original *The Secret of Monkey Island, Grim Fandango* (both at LucasArts), and *Psychonauts* (published by Majesco)
AWARDS: Game Developers Choice Award for Best Writing (with Eric Wolpaw of *Portal* fame) for *Psychonauts;* British Academy of Film and Television Arts for Best Screenplay for *Psychonauts*
FASCINATING FACT: Schafer wrote the cover letter that accompanied his application for a job at LucasArts in the form of a text adventure, with little graphics at the side, created on an Atari 800 using Koala Pad. He got the job.



2 HOLLYWOOD HACKS GET GAME

Three screenwriters sign on to game-based projects

Perhaps Hollywood has finally come to its senses and matured past the Uwe Boll era of middling-to-awful film adaptations of decent videogames. These days, serious professional motion picture industry talent is connecting with game-based projects—most recently screenwriters Dan Harris, Scott Z. Burns, and David Hayter.

Dan Harris—best known for co-writing *X2: X-Men United* and *Superman Returns,* as well as penning and writing *Imaginary Heroes*—has been attached to the Universal Pictures version of Electronic Art's *Dante's Inferno* (previewed last issue).

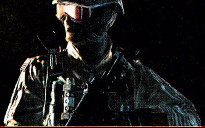
Another Universal adaptation of an EA game is the actioner *Army of Two.* In this case, **Scott Z. Burns** is writing the screenplay. Burns brings some serious street cred having written *The Bourne Ultimatum* and produced Al Gore's Oscar-winning *An Inconvenient Truth* documentary.

Many videogamers might only know **David Hayter** as the voice of Solid Snake in the English-language versions of *Metal Gear Solid.* But Hayter is no scriptwriting slouch. He wrote the screenplay for the original *X-Men* flick, co-wrote *X-Men 2* and *The Scorpion King* (Universal), and also co-wrote the recently released *Watchmen* movie for Warner Bros. He is also writing the screenplay for the film version of Capcom's *Lost Planet: Extreme Condition* for the studio. As if that wasn't enough to keep him busy, Hayter also just founded his own production house, Dark Hero Studios, which has designs on delivering movie, videogame, TV, and Internet projects.

3

DESIGN BY TWEET

How Twitter can help shape game design



Several game companies have turned to Twitter and its 140-character maximum posts to update followers to events or new content. Infinity Ward, who will release *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2* on November 9th has been even bolder in its requests for information. Makes sense: ask the fans what they want, but limit them to 140 characters! We took a look through the posts to see what might have caught the development team's collective eye.

INFINITY WARD:

What new locations would you like to see in *Modern Warfare 2* (SP & MP)? – Reply along with #MW2, track @ http://zz.gd/4626b0

The ability to choose the sex of your character for multiplayer and single-player. SEXY MARINE CHICKS ftw! (flowery_air)

Co-op for the story campaign. I enjoyed working with my clan—it inspires teamwork. (jcmarkel)

destructible walls and cover, and blow peoples arms and legs off. (GEWEHR98)

Ability to actually kill the pilot in a helicopter by shooting at the cockpit glass. (Logan832)

A kind of "terrorist hunt" mode would be great for when I'm sick of campaign but don't want to play online. (adam_grif)

And in the "thanks for trying" pile:
I'D LIKE TO SEE GODZILLA AS THE FINAL BOSS. THANKS IN ADVANCE. (dragon_heart007)

Hostage rescue and extraction game type. (bigkyfan10)

4

THE BURNING QUESTION

This month, we asked developers: What do you do to celebrate the completion of a game? Do you have a party? Do you go on vacation?

Isamu Kamikokuryo
SQUARE ENIX, ART DIRECTOR ON *FF XIII*

"Me and a few people that I get along with on the team usually get together and book our own vacation to a tropical island, like Bali, for a week or two, and spend time away."

Motomu Toriyama
SQUARE ENIX, DIRECTOR ON *FF XIII*

"We had a Summon called Valefor ('Varufare,' in Japanese) in *Final Fantasy X.* There's actually a huge nightclub in Tokyo with the same name (Velfarre). So after we wrapped *FF X,* we held our wrap party there."

Takeshi Arakawa
SQUARE ENIX, SENIOR DIRECTOR ON *DISSIDIA*

"I take a trip to the hot springs with my wife. Towards the end of development, I get so busy and don't get much time at home, so this vacation is my 'family service.'"

Yoshinori Kitase
SQUARE ENIX, PRODUCER ON *FF XIII, DISSIDIA*

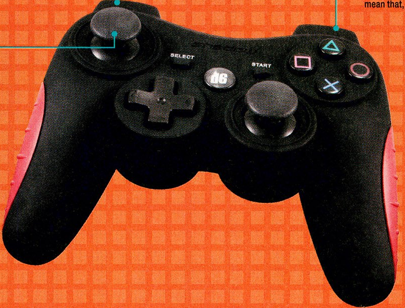
"We usually do wrap parties and invite people that were involved in the motion capture and voice acting. Sometimes we do mini-concerts with the people that sing the theme song in the game. We've had occasions where we invite comedians to come in to do a stand-up set."

5 HARDWARE

dreamGEAR Shadow Wireless Controller

MSRP: $39.99 | Website: www.dreamgear.net

Offset analog sticks. Concave L2 and R2 buttons that actually cradle your trigger finger. A little on the small side. Interesting, dreamGEAR's new PS3 pad follows the Xbox 360 controller design pretty closely. That's great if you're looking for that configuration, but a couple of oddities mean that, if you can, you should try it first.



TRIGGER HAPPY
The trigger decision is just plain sense for many gamers, forming a natural cupping of that all-important fire (or accelerate, zoom, whatever) command that can slip so easily in the heat of intense battle on the standard PS3 controllers.

ASYMMETRIC ANALOG
The offset analog sticks? We'd like the positioning more if the controller itself was just a bit larger. For our average-sized hands, it felt a little cramped, though in general, a few PTOM staffers are quite comfortable with the offset formation.

TAKES TWO
The oddity with this controller is how it wirelessly connects to the PS3, and powers its dual rumble motors. First, it requires a USB receiver dongle to be housed in one USB port (press the button on the dongle to start it flashing, then hit the PS button on the controller to sync it to your system) and if you want to charge the controller while playing, you need to plug in the supplied mini-USB to a second port. Though the controller does have a rechargeable battery, this requirement to use two USB ports if you want to charge and play could be a problem for some users charging another controller, using a flash drive, or whatever else on a system with just the two USB ports.

Polk Audio SurroundBar SDA Instant Home Theater

MSRP: $499.95 | Website: www.polkaudio.com

Great sound can cost a good amount of money—that's why after even investing in the cutting-edge visual experience afforded by a hi-def TV and Blu-ray–equipped PS3, many PlayStation owners shortchange the sound portion of their gaming setup. While Polk Audio's SurroundBar SDA system isn't exactly inexpensive, it's a significant improvement over the factory-equipped speakers on TVs and offers an audio experience on par with traditional surround sound rigs costing twice as much. Let's be honest: a single soundbar/subwoofer configuration isn't going to match the performance of a true multi-speaker high-end home theater system, but the SurroundBar SDA does a great job imparting an enhanced sense of spatial awareness, especially with Blu-ray movies and games. The best part? The system takes about 15 minutes to set up and you won't have speaker wires running all over your living room.

Iomega Home Media Network Hard Drive

MSRP: $159.99 (500GB); $229.99 (1TB) | Website: www.iomega.com

If you're constantly bumping up against the storage limits of your PS3's hard drive, Iomega's external drive offers some welcome breathing room. Connected via your wireless network router, you're able to store, access, and stream music, photo, and video files, freeing up your PS3's drive for those all-important game-related files.

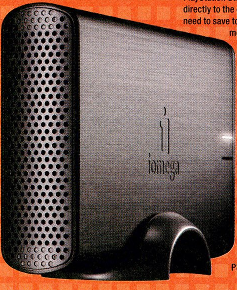
However, our real-world test uncovered various quirks that undermine its core usefulness:

1) Hardware set up is straightforward, but the dense instruction manual on the in-box install CD made getting file streaming up and running a trickier task than expected. (Iomega's website does have better PS3-specific directions.)

2) Items downloaded from the PlayStation Store can't be saved directly to the external drive. You'll need to save to the PS3 drive, copy to a memory card or flash drive, load to your computer, and then place the files on the Iomega drive for back-up storage.

3) Digital rights issues prevent some media files (like those purchased from iTunes and the PS store) from being accessible or even transferable to the drive.

While the HMN hard drive won't be the end-all to your game-related storage issues, you won't have to perform the damning dance of file deletion with your PS3 quite as frequently.



DYNASTY WARRIORS® 6
Empires

PLAYSTATION 3

XBOX 360®

XBOX LIVE

TEEN™
T
Alcohol Reference
Violence
ESRB CONTENT RATING www.esrb.org

WWW.KOEI.COM/DW6_EMPIRES

JUNE 2009

Produced by Ω-Force

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6

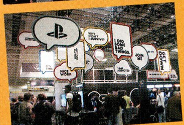
GDC 09

Game Developers Conference 09

PlayStation: The Official Magazine | All the "Need To Know" Highlights that you need to know

Something for everyone in San Francisco

GDC 09
Game Developers Conference

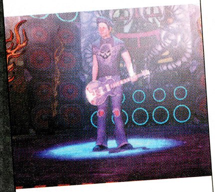


The PlayStation booth on the expo floor offered playable versions of *Fat Princess, Rag Doll Kung Fu,* and lots of word bubbles. Skinny princesses were on hand, too.

LittleBIGPlanet

And The Award Goes to… LittleBigPlanet

At the 2009 Game Developers Choice Awards, Media Molecule took charge with four big-time awards. To wit, *LittleBigPlanet* won gold for Best Game Design, Innovation, Best Debut Game, and Best Technology. Not to be outdone, PSP hit *God of War: Chains of Olympus* took the Best Handheld award.



Guitar Hero brings it on Home

Activision announced its support for PlayStation Home by creating a new space adorned with *Guitar Hero* décor, including filthy couches, walls decorated with posters, a range of differently lit sections, and smoke-filled rooms. The large, virtual room was empty (due to the fact it wasn't publicly available yet), featured a handful of visible screens and the playable game, *God of Rock.* Activision said it would continuously upgrade and change the space based on fan and user input.

Kojima failed to address the question on the minds of millions of gamers worldwide: Will the Mullet hairstyle ever appear in another videogame again?

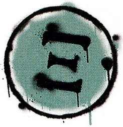
Kojima Keynotes GDC Day 2, Addresses "Next MGS"

Hideo Kojima, recipient of this year's GDC "Lifetime Achievement Award," said he intends to break the barrier between Western and Eastern design philosophies with the next *Metal Gear Solid.* How? By focusing the design on hardware, like Eastern studios, and software, like Western studios. Okay...

Kojima then invited American game designers to join Kojima Productions to make this next *MGS* game. Always intent on keeping fans on their toes, Kojima's slide presentation showed the words "The next *MGS,*" with a picture of Raiden's back behind the letters. Will the next *Metal Gear* feature Raiden since Snake made his "final" appearance in *MGS4?* Kojima later said to expect more "substance" on the next *Metal Gear* game at E3. You can see where this is heading, right?

Ratchet & Clank: A Crack in Time

Insomniac announced the newest entry of its 3D platformer series (okay, okay, it's now called an action-based platformer, whatever), *A Crack in Time,* making that number six in the series proper. It's coming to PS3 this fall (so we expect greatness given how *Tools of Destruction* turned out).



Ready to ARG with XI?

Getting you in the mood to spend more time in PlayStation Home, Sony launched the "first console-based Alternate Reality Game (ARG)" dubbed *XI.* Look for the ever-changing graffiti on the wall in the main square.

Blog Lounge Delivers the Goods

Following its chill-style set-up from year's past, Sony camped out at the W Hotel providing a regular carousel of fresh new games each day at its Blog Lounge. Fully playable was Sucker Punch's *inFamous,* an intense, visually arresting action game that blends hints of *Assassin's Creed* and *Crackdown* with its open-world flexibility and immense vertical platforming. No less significant were fully playable versions of *Fat Princess* (a DLC multiplayer game), *PixelJunk Eden Encore* (an engaging-looking DLC sequel to *PixelJunk's* original plant-growing title), and *Rag Doll Kung Fu: Fists of Plastic* (a funny DLC brawler).

7

I'm Better Than You… AND HERE'S MY $5 TO PROVE IT!

HOW IT WORKS:

① **CHALLENGE** other users head-to-head and in online tournaments

② **PLAY** Your favorite PS3 games online

③ **WIN!** Cash and prizes playing on WorldGaming.com

On a lazy weekend afternoon, Florida Atlantic University graduates Billy Levy and Zach Zeldin sat in their living room playing *Madden* football with a pile of money on the floor. Their friends, visiting for the weekend, were playing online poker. After betting and losing (and subsequent screams of rage and laughter), Levy and Zeldin realized their experiences were similar—gaming and betting were taking up all their time. Was there a way to marry the two?

Dreamed up in January 2006, Levy and Zeldin founded WorldGaming (www.worldgaming.com), a destination designed for gamers to casually compete or engage in serious competitions for money. WorldGaming's website enables console players to compete and bet on games with wagers ranging from $2 to $200 (or more), all depending on the players involved, while engaging in a community built around reputation and skills. At press time, 9,000 people had signed up for the site's beta, competing for $78,000 in prize money; the site will go fully live by the time this magazine hits shelves.

Competitors can sign up in less than five minutes, customize their profile, and look for gamers from around the world for ranked or unranked head-to-head matches. Once they've located a competitor and agreed on a wager, gamers then turn from their computer to their TV, head to the agreed upon game, and play. The site supports games on PS3, PS2, Xbox 360, and Xbox and currently only permits one-on-one challenges. In a few short months, says Levy, team-play games will be supported.

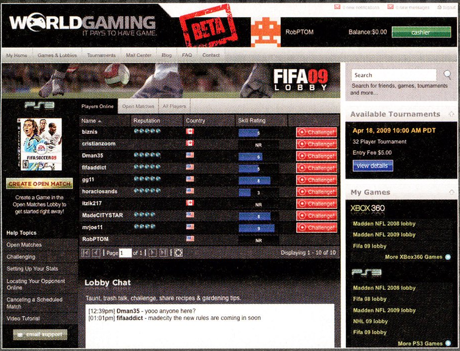
The site's most popular games are *Halo 3, Madden 09,* and *FIFA 09,* in that order. But *FIFA* is the fastest growing game on the site due to newly permitted access of players from the UK and Australia. The full list of games available for PS3 includes *Fight Night Round 3, Madden 09, FIFA 09, Resistance: Fall of Man, MotorStorm: Pacific Rift, NHL 09,* and *NCAA Football 09.* Games soon to be supported include *GTA IV, Call of Duty 4, NBA 2K9, Midnight Club Los Angeles, NBA Live 09, Warhawk,* and *Lost Planet.*

WorldGaming is designed for players of all skill levels (unlike Major League Gaming's focus on the very best in the world). Once players sign up, they earn rankings and reputations. WorldGaming holds nightly scheduled competitions and offers generous rewards for players even if they don't make the final rounds of a championship tourney. For example, if you enter into a five-tier tourney and make it to the second round (but subsequently lose), you're likely to make some money. Though this site isn't the only one making a claim for dominance in the skill-based gaming sphere (we profiled BringIt in the March '09 issue), it's got a slick interface, and will no doubt be a big player in this area in the coming months.

> Videogames are skill-based, so you can wager on your own abilities through worldgaming.com

WILLIAM LEVY
PRESIDENT & FOUNDER

ZACK ZELDIN
VICE PRESIDENT & CO-FOUNDER



RobPTOM

Balance:$0.00

Create a Game in the Open Matches Lobby to get started right away!

Name ▲	Reputation	Country	Skill Rating	
biznis	●●●●●	🇨🇦	5	Challenge!
cristianzoom		🇨🇦	NR	Challenge!
Dman35	●●●●●	🇺🇸	6	Challenge!
fifaaddict	●●●●●	🇺🇸	5	Challenge!
gg11	●●●●●	🇺🇸	8	Challenge!
horaciosands	●●●●●	🇺🇸	3	Challenge!
itzik217		🇨🇦	NR	Challenge!
MadeCITYSTAR	●●●●	🇺🇸	8	Challenge!
mrjoe11	●●●●	🇺🇸	9	Challenge!
RobPTOM		🇺🇸	NR	

Page 1 of 1 — Displaying 1 - 10 of 10

Help Topics
- Open Matches
- Challenging
- Setting Up Your Stats
- Locating Your Opponent Online
- Canceling a Scheduled Match
- Video Tutorial

Lobby Chat

Taunt, trash talk, challenge, share recipes & gardening tips.

[12:39pm] **Dman35** - yooo anyone here?
[01:01pm] **fifaaddict** - madecity the new rules are coming in soon

Search for friends, games, tournaments and more...

Available Tournaments

Apr 18, 2009 10:00 AM PDT
32 Player Tournament
Entry Fee $5.00

My Games

XBOX 360
- Madden NFL 2008 lobby
- Madden NFL 2009 lobby
- Fifa 09 lobby
- More XBox360 Games

PS3
- Madden NFL 2008 lobby
- Fifa 08 lobby
- Madden NFL 2009 lobby
- NHL 09 lobby
- Fifa 09 lobby
- More PS3 Games

After the quick set up, getting into a game is easy, thanks to a good community and friendly players.

8 GAME TRADING ON TRIAL

Publishers and retailers plead the case for and against trading used videogames

PLAYSTATION 3
CALL OF DUTY
WORLD AT WAR
NEW! $59.99
MATURE 17+
M
ACTIVISION

If you have ever sold a videogame you purchased, or bought a used game from someone else, thank the U.S. Supreme Court for the privilege. Back in 1909, the Supremes arrived at what we now call the First-Sale Doctrine, which says anyone has the right to sell, lend, rent, or give away a trademarked good that was obtained legally. That's why you can sell a videogame to GameStop, Amazon.com, or Play N Trade, and they can sell the same game to someone else.

Yet what is legal isn't always popular. Especially with game publishers and developers who argue that it is unfair when their intellectual property is resold and they don't get a cut.

FOR THE PROSECUTION

David Perry
ACCLAIM ENTERTAINMENT
Chief Creative Officer

To videogame developers and publishers every used sale is a potential new sale lost. Why do they care? The wholesale price of a $59.99 PlayStation 3 title can be as high as $53. To the third-party developer who may get 12-percent of the wholesale price, that's $6.36 lost. To the publisher, that's $46.64 lost.

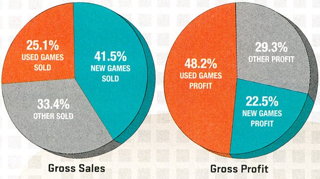
So when a new $59.99 game is sold back to a retailer for a $22 credit a week after release, and goes back on the shelf for $50, publishers and developers get angry. They see that $50 used price point cannibalizing their new game sales. If the used game is in like-new shape, they argue there is no reason for gamers to want it new for $10 more. For retailers, it's gravy. Instead of making a $6.99 profit on a new game sale, they can pull in a $28 profit on the used sale.

GameStop's financial report for the 13 weeks ending Nov. 1, 2008 illustrates the situation perfectly. New game transactions accounted for 41.5-percent of sales, while used game transactions were 25.1-percent of sales. But as a percentage of gross profit, used game sales were 48.2-percent, and new game sales were 22.5-percent. When publishers and developers see numbers like that they go apoplectic.

Other retailers have decided they should get a piece of the used game action. As of spring 2009, Amazon.com, Best Buy, Blockbuster Video, and Toys "R" Us have all jumped into the used game business, or are running market tests.

Publishers don't like all the dollars they allocate to retail to help promote new title sales used just as easily to promote used game sales. At the DICE (Design, Innovate, Communicate, Entertain) Summit in Las Vegas last February, Acclaim Entertainment's chief creative officer, David Perry, had choice words for what he called Used GameStop, a theme he extended subsequently on his blog.

"Sure, let me go make you exclusive content, let me advertise to send buyers into your store, let me pay to put standees and posters everywhere, so you can sell them used games and stab our industry in the back. Now you've shown that the industry won't stand up to you, everyone else can copy this practice," Perry accused.



GameStop's Gross Sales vs. Profit

MITIGATING CIRCUMSTANCES

PlayStation Network's growing library of downloadable content illustrates how SCEA hopes to go direct in selling you their games in the future. Game makers are betting the more comfortable gamers become in digital downloading, the fewer will frequent game stores, and the less revenue publishers and developers will have to share with retailers.

But used game retailers have a more serious competitor on the horizon than direct digital downloads—online game trading websites like SwitchGames and Goozex. Why get $22 in trade to spend $50, when you can trade titles of equal value with another gamer for under $10 in shipping charges? That's an option eBay is not optimized for, and could be popular enough to cut substantially into the retail used game business.

For SwitchGames chief executive Jason Crawford the key is using a web interface to connect traders effortlessly. SwitchGames is still in beta, yet it has over 30,000 game listings, 80-percent of which are tradeable. Between 500 and 2,000 listings are added daily, he says, and in the future, buy to own and auction options will be added.

"We initially projected that users would average one to two sessions a month, but what we're finding is that people are visiting every day. They're using the interface like day traders—checking back on their trades and looking for new titles that may have become available," says Crawford.

At its basic level, SwitchGames is free to use. Like eBay, buyers and sellers earn confidence ratings based on their trades. But setting the price and arranging shipping is up to the users. Where SwitchGames makes money is by offering services to enhance trades: postage labels, safe trading where the games go to a Netflix-style hub where they are inspected before being shipped, and verified memberships where SwitchGames vouches for member's credit cards and addresses.

While there is a tempest over used videogame sales today, that storm will

CALL OF DUTY
WORLD AT WAR
used
$50
PLAYSTATION 3
M
ACTIVISION

Used Game Retailers

BEST BUY

TOYS "R" US

amazon.com

20% OFF
SAVE 20% ON ANY USED PS3 GAME PURCHASE
COUPON CODE: EBC3003429
GameStop

Profits speak, and in tight times saving that $10 or using a coupon can tip the balance in favor of a used game sale. But if all these retailers get involved, will that force down the price of a used game? Will the increased competition make it even more attractive for gamers as the retailers use new incentives? Maybe!

FOR THE DEFENSE

At the Game Business Law Summit in Dallas last January, GameStop senior vice president Mike Hogan made one of the most detailed presentations on the retailer's used business seen to date. On the major issue of the retailer selling used copies of major titles right after release, Hogan made the case that 90-percent of the games his stores sell are 90 days or more from their original launch dates. At DICE, GameStop chief operating officer J. Paul Raines went further to declare that only four-percent of the retailer's used game sales were for games within 60 days of their original release.

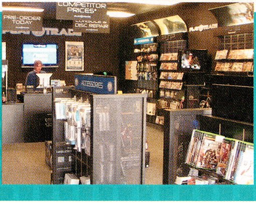
Hogan and Raines' other defense is that GameStop's used business promotes new game sales, with 75-percent of all credits issued to buy back games were immediately utilized to purchase new games. Hogan said 20-percent of all copies of *Call of Duty: World at War* had a trade credit attached to them.

Play N Trade chief executive Larry Plotnick had a similar perspective on used sales promoting new releases. "What we have seen is the hardcore guy who wants to play more games, the next big release—13 to 18 games a year. He uses the $20 to $25 he gets for trading in the games he's finished with to buy something new," says Plotnick.

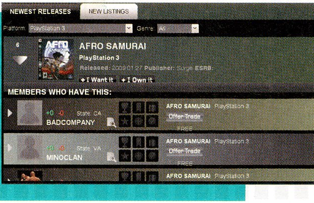
By George T. Chronis, editor of the *DFC Dossier* (published by research firm DFC Intelligence)

subside as alternatives such as digital delivery and online trading expand in the months ahead. Where used game retailers have growth potential, according to Play N Trade's Plotnick, is with casual consumers.

"There are a lot of moms who are buying from places like Target, and later find their way to us. We end up training them about trading in games to buy new games. The difference is these new traders will bring in a ton of games all at once to buy something new, rather than come in more often with the game they just finished," Plotnick told PTOM.



◄ Play N Trade stores specialize in used game sales.



Platform: PlayStation 3
Genre: All

6

AFRO SAMURAI
PlayStation 3
Released: 2009 01 27 Publisher: Surge ESRB:

MEMBERS WHO HAVE THIS:

+0 -0 State: CA
BADCOMPANY
AFRO SAMURAI PlayStation 3

FREE

+0 -0 State: VA
MINOCLAN
AFRO SAMURAI PlayStation 3

FREE

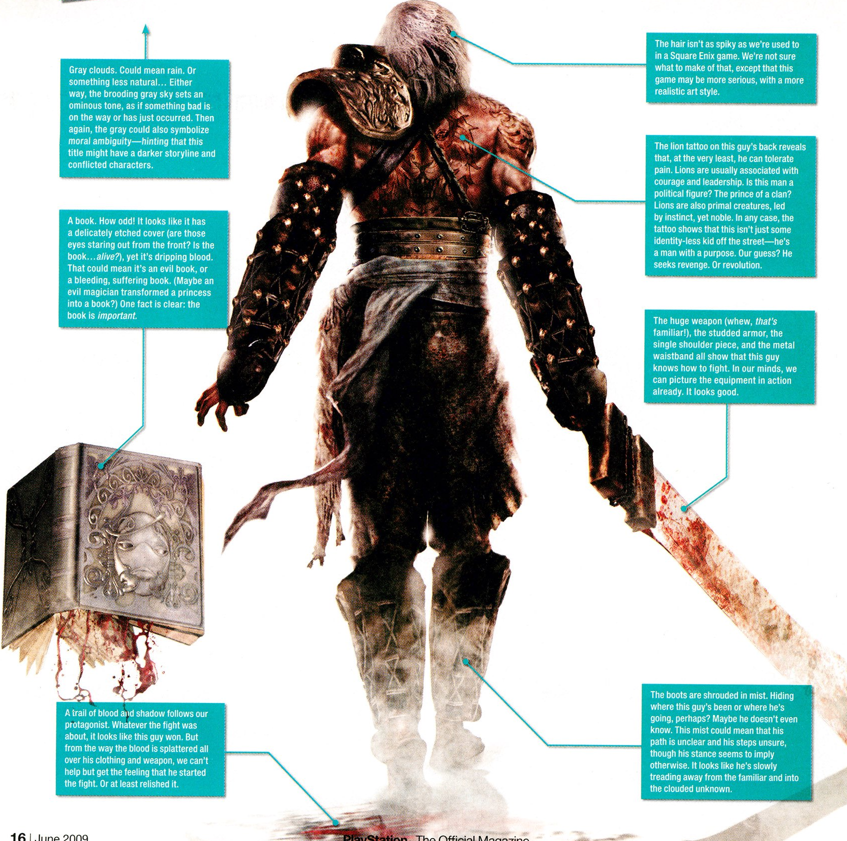
AFRO SAMURAI PlayStation 3

SwitchGames members who have *Afro Samurai* to trade. Good luck! ►

9 SQUARE ENIX MYSTERY

Another month, another teaser about Square Enix's still-to-be-named new game

No name. No genre. No details. Just a single, gorgeous piece of art of Square Enix's new game. Square Enix isn't ready to spill the facts, but we're not letting that stop us. Here are our conclusions from the images we've seen (and the stuff we may have "accidently" overheard). We're starting to imagine a blend of *Devil May Cry's* combo-heavy gameplay with *God of War's* angst-filled story.



Gray clouds. Could mean rain. Or something less natural... Either way, the brooding gray sky sets an ominous tone, as if something bad is on the way or has just occurred. Then again, the gray could also symbolize *moral ambiguity—hinting* that this title might have a darker storyline and conflicted characters.

The hair isn't as spiky as we're used to in a Square Enix game. We're not sure what to make of that, except that this game may be more serious, with a more realistic art style.

The lion tattoo on this guy's back reveals that, at the very least, he can tolerate pain. Lions are usually associated with courage and leadership. Is this man a political figure? The prince of a clan? Lions are also primal creatures, led by instinct, yet noble. In any case, the tattoo shows that this isn't just some identity-less kid off the street—he's a man with a purpose. Our guess? He seeks revenge. Or revolution.

A book. How odd! It looks like it has a delicately etched cover (are those eyes staring out from the front? Is the book...*alive?*), yet it's dripping blood. That could mean it's an evil book, or a bleeding, suffering book. (Maybe an evil magician transformed a princess into a book?) One fact is clear: the book is *important.*

The huge weapon (whew, *that's* familiar!), the studded armor, the single shoulder piece, and the metal waistband all show that this guy knows how to fight. In our minds, we can picture the equipment in action already. It looks good.

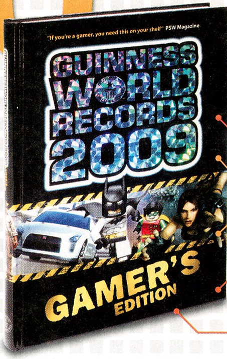
A trail of blood and shadow follows our protagonist. Whatever the fight was about, it looks like this guy won. But from the way the blood is splattered all over his clothing and weapon, we can't help but get the feeling that he started the fight. Or at least relished it.

The boots are shrouded in mist. Hiding where this guy's been or where he's going, perhaps? Maybe he doesn't even know. This mist could mean that his path is unclear and his steps unsure, though his stance seems to imply otherwise. It looks like he's slowly treading away from the familiar and into the clouded unknown.

10 THIS INDEX OF AWESOME

The "official world records" authorities turn their attention to videogames

For every determined high-score addict, every patient speed-run perfectionist, every fanatical videogame collector: here is something to aspire to. Weighing in at 216 pages and $21.95 (don't worry, you can find it cheaper online), the *Guinness World Records 2009: Gamer's Edition* crams every meaningful videogame–related record imaginable—along with an exhaustive array of fun facts and trivia that any gamer can appreciate—into a classy, hardcover tome. If you want to learn more, check out **http://gamers.guinnessworldrecords.com,** but for now, here are a few of our favorite facts and records:


"If you're a gamer, you need this on your shelf" PSW Magazine
GUINNESS WORLD RECORDS 2009
GAMER'S EDITION

The PS3 sold one million units in just 50 weeks, which was actually faster than the PS2.

American Jason Dvorak holds the record for the world's largest collection of PlayStation products, which includes over 1,500 pieces of hardware, games, and guides.

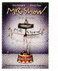
Fastest play-through of *Metal Gear Solid* (PSone): 1 hour, 55 minutes, 31 seconds by Rodrigo Lopes (Brazil)

The PS2 was the cheapest DVD player on the market when it launched, which—according to the book—"fueled massive sales in Japan."

Fastest play-through of *Resident Evil 2* (PSone): 1 hour, 27 minutes, 29 seconds by Ben Greenman (USA)

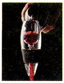
ETCETERA

All the *other* stuff that delights the PTOM staff and distracts us from our work—but our significant others won't let us have.



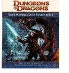
Mr. Show: The Complete Collection | DVD set | $44.99
Recently, reminiscing about the glory days of shows now past, Scott decided to track down one of his favorite bygone programs: *Mr. Show,* a smart, satirical sketch comedy show that wasn't afraid to both offend and enlighten. And guess what Amazon turned up? That's right, every single episode on DVD for just $45. So apparently that's why good shows get canceled: so they can be re-released in cheap DVD box sets!

Black Heaven | DVD set | $39.97
In a seeming continuation of last month's obscure-athon deathmatch, Carlos the Intern counters Scott's DVD set of choice with *Black Heaven.* It's about a salary man who was in a popular heavy metal band when he was young, but is now merely saddled with a wife and kids. Until, that is, he meets a hot alien chick that needs him to rock to turn the tides in a space battle. What is it with you guys? Is retro-obscure the new cutting edge?!



Vinturi Wine Aerator | Wine | $40
While the kids argue over the DVD player, Rob contemplates the PlayStation universe with a glass of wine and a strange five-minute swirling ritual. He patiently explains that passing air over the wine brings out its flavors. But if all that swirling causes more spills than nods of appreciation from onlookers, the wine aerator does the same trick in a jiffy. If you like "big" reds, as Rob is so la-di-dah to bore us rigid about, then pouring the wine through the Vinturi will "open up its body." Oooh, sounds kinky, Rob.

Kilohana Grill | Restaurant | About $10 a plate
While Rob soldiers on with liquid sustenance, Roger heads to Kilohana Grill for some ono (delicious) Hawaiian food after another long day at work. His standby—Combo 1 (BBQ Chicken and Beef with rice and potato salad)—is so good he secretly doesn't mind missing dinner at home. Check 'em out at their two SF Bay Area locations (San Ramon and Emeryville) and say "aloha" to Uncle Myron and Auntie Pam.



D&D RPG Starter Set | Game | $16.99
Seemingly intent on creating a dichotomy between the urbane and well, the nerd, Rob's excitement over Wizards of the Coast's *Dungeons & Dragons 4th Edition* even exceeds his overflowing love for vino. The starter set is an absolute bargain, comprising the very basic rules you need to get started, a brief adventure, and some dungeon floor plans. Just enough to whet the appetite so that you might plunk down nearly $100 for the full gift set of core rulebooks. Diabolical!

Burt's Bees Beeswax Lip Balm | Cosmetics | $3.00
And speaking of nerds, when did Teresa decide to become a girl…er, woman? Last month it was nail polish and now putting beeswax on her lips as a moisturizer? "Not only does the waxy balm hydrate lips, it has a peppermint zing. Just remember, buy the version in the tube—the old-fashioned tin, though trendy, creates too much mess," she says. Um, okay…but could you talk about raids and leveling up so we know you're not a pod person?

Japanese-style PSP Games | Website | $20-$40
Not one to relinquish her claim to nerdom, Teresa counters with some amazing PlayStation games that have recently released. She's been traveling a lot lately—and for that, she needs her trusty PSP. Her current obsession: Japanese-style PSP games. *LocoRoco 2, Patapon 2, Star Ocean,* and *Phantasy Star Portable* to name a few. But Teresa gets a bit too carried away trying to earn all the collectibles and secrets. And now her thumbs hurt. A lot. Maybe a nice hand lotion would help…

Wild 9 | Game | Um...check the Used bin
Not content with a single front war with Scott, Carlos unleashes a surprise retro-gaming offensive on Teresa with *Wild 9.* While Carlos loves the grab-enemies-and-torture-them gameplay, the title is pretty much forgotten in the annals of gaming history. Except by Roger, who once wrote a widely unread exclusive cover feature about the game for *Ultra GamePlayers* magazine. Apparently, everyone was more interested in some game called *Super Mario 64*. Go figure.

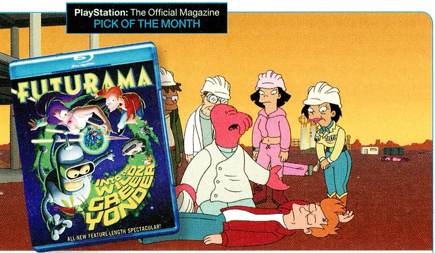
Off With Their Heads | Band | $10
While Carlos is distracted by his gaming Eastern Front, Scott seeks to liberate musical minds with the aptly named Off With Their Heads. According to Scott, there's a pretty severe disconnect between the band's music and lyrics. While their sound consists largely of insanely catchy, straightforward pop punk that comes off as fun and cheerful, their lyrics border on tragic. And while this may not sound particularly enjoyable, the final product is both catchy and cathartic. Just the combo we were looking for.

Trek Madone 5.1 WSD | Bicycle | $2,500
And finally, a tale of selfless love. In 2006, Roger and his wife suffered the cruel theft of their beloved road bikes. By a twist of fate, Roger's bike was recovered and returned, but his poor wife remained bikeless…until now. Her new Trek Madone 5.1 is a beauty and just happens to be Roger's dream bike. And the selfless part? He can't believe he didn't figure out some way to finagle the bike for himself! Awww, it must be love.

Blu-ray Central

We continue to ignore *Twilight* because it sucks. Instead: a vampire movie that isn't horrid, a surprisingly grim look at Marvel's darkest, and an awful lot of animation.

PlayStation: The Official Magazine
PICK OF THE MONTH


FUTURAMA
INTO THE WILD GREEN YONDER
ALL-NEW FEATURE-LENGTH SPECTACULAR!

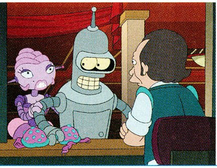
Futurama: Into the Wild Green Yonder

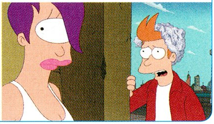
PRICE: $39.99 RATED: PG-13

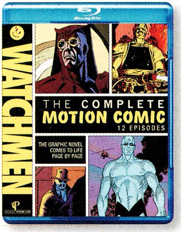
| MOVIE | The last of the original queue of *Futurama* movies continues the bold tradition of hilarious sci-fi satire. This time going after eco-warriors, *Into the Wild Green Yonder* isn't quite as funny as *Bender's Game,* but it's still worth every penny for fans of the great show and of adult-edged animation in general.

| EXTRAS | Rowdy cast and crew commentary that's fun for fans, complete with picture-in-picture support, along with an impressive bounty of other goodies covering all aspects of the production and no shortage of jokes.

MOVIE ★★★★
EXTRAS ★★★★






WATCHMEN
THE COMPLETE MOTION COMIC
12 EPISODES
THE GRAPHIC NOVEL COMES TO LIFE PAGE BY PAGE

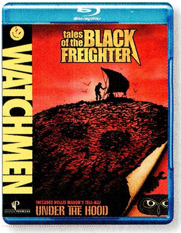
Watchmen: The Complete Motion Comic

PRICE: $35.99 RATED: NOT RATED

| MOVIE | Aside from being a blatant marketing attempt to cash-in on the hoped-for popularity of the amazingly good live action movie, this somewhat animated rendition of the graphic novel is more of a curiosity for fans than essential viewing. The bizarre manner of making the pages spring forth to your video screen is an acquired taste last seen in the PlayStation Store with the *Dead Space* graphic novel prequel. Frankly, it's just not a great way to transition comics to video, and you're better off reading the graphic novel. Sure the content is still great, but something feels lost in translation.

| EXTRAS | Not surprisingly, what little extras are here are meant to cash in on the new movie, including a short production diary video. For a work of such prominence and renown, there's not much to see here.

MOVIE ★★½
EXTRAS ★★


WATCHMEN
tales of the BLACK FREIGHTER
INCLUDES HOLLIS MASON'S TELL-ALL: UNDER THE HOOD

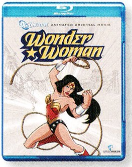
Watchmen: Tales of the Black Freighter

PRICE: $35.99 RATED: PG

| MOVIE | More successful and easier to recommend than *Motion Comic,* yet still of limited value, *Tales of the Black Freighter* has excellent production values going for it. In truth, this is a top-notch rendition of the grizzly story-within-a-story from the *Watchmen* graphic novel. It's just hard to imagine anyone watching it more than once or twice. Of more interest is the '70s-era TV news story of *Under the Hood,* which is a dead-on satire of a show from the times. It's well-done, but again, not likely to get much use after the first viewing.

| EXTRAS | The extras on this disc are somewhat more successful, particularly the "story within a story" segment that helps tie the two short movies here into the overall mythology of the graphic novel and movie. Beyond that, there's just a few tie-in previews.

MOVIE ★★★
EXTRAS ★★★½



Wonder Woman

PRICE: $29.99 RATED: PG-13

| MOVIE | DC's animated films have been surprisingly good lately, and *Wonder Woman* may well be the best yet. Although a bit cheesy to start, this PG-13 rated, straight-to-video origin story gets almost everything right. It's questionable for young children thanks to plenty of stabbings, war scenes, beheadings, and even some innuendo. But for older viewers, it's a great take on DC's prime femme fatale. Excellent voice work from Nathan Fillion, Keri Russell, Virginia Madsen, Alfred Molina, and others, elevate a surprisingly good script. Also included are four episodes of the *Justice League* animated series focusing on the scantily-clad ass-kicker.

| EXTRAS | Adding to the overall value of the disc is the excellent array of extras. The commentary and two in-depth and mature documentaries on Wonder Woman are excellent, and there's a preview of the upcoming *Green Lantern* animated movie as well.

MOVIE ★★★★
EXTRAS ★★★★

LET THE RIGHT ONE IN
"BEST. VAMPIRE MOVIE. EVER."
"A VAMPIRE TALE LIKE NO OTHER. MESMERIZING."
MAGNET

Let the Right One In

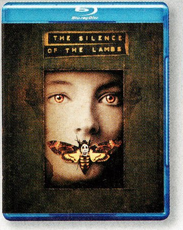
PRICE: $34.98 RATED: R

| MOVIE | Think of *Let the Right One In* as the anti-*Twilight.* In direct contradiction to that mess of clichéd teenage angst, crappy writing, and a host of things that only seem deep and meaningful to teenage girls, this is the real deal of child vamps. The story of a disturbed and bullied boy in Sweden who discovers a forever-12-year-old vampire girl named Eli living next door is bold, beautiful, and disturbing. The movie manages to create a true sense of sympathy for little Eli, without ever losing sight of the fact that she is still a monster. The cinematography of stark frozen landscapes is stunning on Blu-ray, and the superb acting puts your average American horror flick to shame.

| EXTRAS | Deleted scenes, some meager making of stuff, photo and poster galleries. It's a shame such an unusual movie didn't get a better extras treatment.

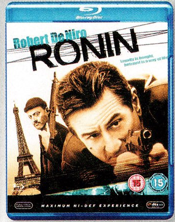
MOVIE ★★★★½
EXTRAS ★★

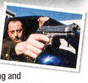
SHORT TAKES: AKA, "Stuff We Like"


THE SILENCE OF THE LAMBS

Silence of the Lambs

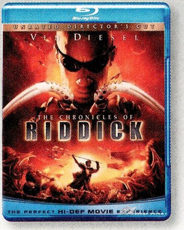
+ Before killer movies devolved into a mess of torture-porn crap, Jonathan Demme proved that the genre could be taut and thought-provoking. Just be sure to ignore the sequels.


Robert DeNiro
RONIN
MAXIMUM HI-DEF EXPERIENCE



Ronin

+ Jean Reno and Robert DeNiro together in one of the most exciting and intelligent thrillers of the '90s.


UNRATED DIRECTOR'S CUT
VIN DIESEL
THE CHRONICLES OF RIDDICK
THE PERFECT HI-DEF MOVIE EXPERIENCE

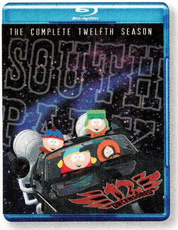
The Chronicles of Riddick

+ Look, it's *Dune* meets *Conan,* and Judi Dench is in it. Also, the movie's visual style is amazingly cool.

THE CHRONICLES OF RIDDICK
PITCH BLACK
VIN DIESEL
THE PERFECT HIGH-DEFINITION EXPERIENCE

Pitch Black

+ Still the best *Aliens* rip-off out there, and gorgeous in hi-def.


THE COMPLETE TWELFTH SEASON
SOUTH PARK

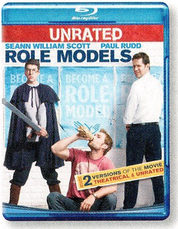
South Park: Season 12

PRICE: $69.99 RATED: NOT RATED

| MOVIE | *Season 12* safely continues the parade of crude satire that *South Park* fans rely on, though it's hardly a banner collection. On Blu-ray, it's a mixed blessing. Overall, the show looks about as good as it possibly could—especially considering the low production values for the show. Strangely however, it's recorded at 1080i, which when combined with the already choppy animation style is liable to cause some viewers to seizure. The effect is definitely not enough to ruin the overall fun, even if it is distracting.

| EXTRAS | The mini-commentaries from creators Matt and Trey are as entertaining and short as ever, and the few other making-of featurettes are pretty good. Still, you can't help but feel that the box set short changes fans with such a minor selection of extras.

MOVIE ★★★½
EXTRAS ★★★


UNRATED
SEANN WILLIAM SCOTT PAUL RUDD
ROLE MODELS
2 VERSIONS OF THE MOVIE THEATRICAL & UNRATED

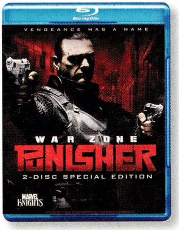
Role Models

PRICE: $39.98 RATED: R/UNRATED

| MOVIE | Judd Apatow officially has serious competition, and Paul Rudd may be the non-disheveled successor to Seth Rogan. Seann William Scott is safe in his womanizing obnoxiousness here, and the bro-mantic chemistry between the two leads is hilariously perfect. For a story that could have simply been treading all-too-familiar waters, *Role Models* manages to provide nearly non-stop laughs the whole way through.

| EXTRAS | Although the commentary track is disappointingly dry and lacking the cast members, there's a ton of extras. Aside from some surprisingly funny gag reels and featurettes, there's almost an hour of deleted scenes to romp through.

MOVIE ★★★★
EXTRAS ★★★½


VENGEANCE HAS A NAME
WAR ZONE
PUNISHER
2-DISC SPECIAL EDITION
MARVEL KNIGHTS

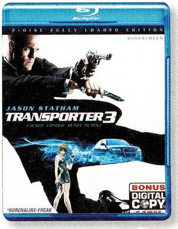
Punisher: War Zone

PRICE: $39.99 RATED: R

| MOVIE | On one level, *War Zone* is a surprisingly successful cinematic representation of Marvel's favorite sociopath. Ray Stevenson is pitch-perfect as Frank Castle, and the script portrays him as a vigorously uncompromising killer. This is a Punisher who takes no prisoners, isn't pretty, and doesn't quip one-liners or torture people with popsicles—he simply kills, brutally, and enjoys it. Unfortunately, the rest of the movie can't keep pace. It falls into familiar clichéd, and often absurdly mediocre TV cop-show-level plotting. Still, the graphic violence and Stevenson's performance are enough to carry the movie to a cautious recommendation.

| EXTRAS | A lot of minor making-of shorts pad out the extras here, but the commentary track between the director and director of photography is surprisingly honest and insightful—which is rare for movies like this.

MOVIE ★★★
EXTRAS ★★★


2-DISC FULLY LOADED EDITION
JASON STATHAM
TRANSPORTER 3
BONUS DIGITAL COPY
"ADRENALINE-FREAK"

Transporter 3

PRICE: $39.99 RATED: PG-13

| MOVIE | Ah, Jason Statham… He'll apparently do anything for money. Thankfully, *Transporter 3* is far better than the second in the line, with Luc Besson taking a greater hand in the script. Is it a good movie? Well, not really, and certainly not as good as the adrenaline-rich original. But Statham is the most charming and watchable of the new crop of action stars, and his charisma manages to elevate the cartoonish action and horrible acting of most of the rest of the cast to a fun, over-the-top thrill ride.

| EXTRAS | As much fun as the thought of a guy named Olivier Megaton directing a movie is, his otherwise informative commentary is nearly ruined by a dry, hard-to-understand delivery. Beyond that, there's the usual crop of behind-the-scenes videos explaining why everyone is excited about the great movie they've made. Yay.

MOVIE ★★★
EXTRAS ★★★

Jason gets one year older this month, and a lot crankier because of it… Comments, questions, rants, raves, recommendations? E-mail him at **PTOM_Bluray@futureus.com.**

BATMAN
ARKHAM ASYLUM™

PLAY AS THE JOKER
IN THE
EXCLUSIVE
THE JOKER CHALLENGE
MAPS

HA
HA
HA
HA

AVAILABLE ONLY ON THE
PLAYSTATION® 3
COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM

IN-STORES **JUNE 23RD**

TEEN
T
CONTENT RATED BY
ESRB

Alcohol and Tobacco Reference
Blood
Mild Language
Suggestive Themes
Violence

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(s09)

WELCOME to THE
MADHOUSE!
REC
HA
HA
HA
HA
HA
HA

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WWW.BATMANARKHAMASYLUM.COM

PS3™
PLAYSTATION®3
PlayStation®Network
INTERACTIVE ENTERTAINMENT
DC
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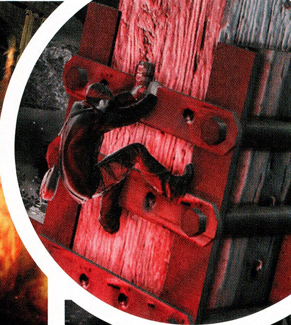
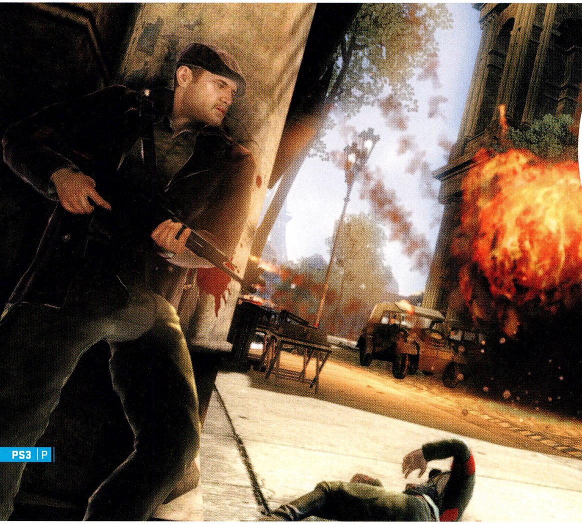
Previews

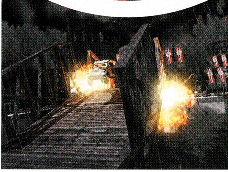
First Look | Hands-On | In-Depth



The emphasis during missions will be on stealth…



The Saboteur's cover system may be the most intuitive and effective to date. Simply push up against any wall or object to melt into cover, but there is a button command to speed up the process.



…but the situation can quickly become explosive.

The Saboteur

First Look Preview

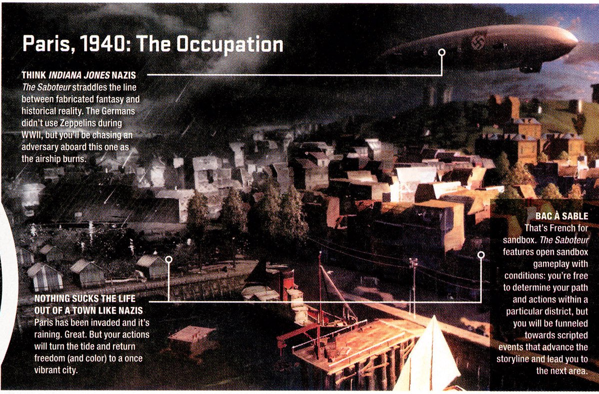
Striking back from the shadows

PS3 AVAILABLE: Fall GENRE: Action Adventure PUBLISHER: EA DEVELOPER: Pandemic Studios

By now you might reasonably conclude that you've seen everything World War II games have to offer. *The Saboteur* reckons otherwise. Think of it as a cross between the gameplay of *Metal Gear, GTA,* and *Medal of Honor,* with the art style of *Sin City,* and you get some idea of what its open-world, color-coded stealth action has in store.

The Saboteur is an ambitious game both in terms of its scale and its concept. You play as Sean Devlin, an Irishman fighting alongside the French Resistance in Nazi-occupied Paris—a city that's literally been bled of its color by Hitler's jackbooted boys. As Devlin uses his sabotage skills to liberate areas of the French capital from the fascists, the black-and-white boulevards will begin to flood with color. If you've seen the film *Pleasantville* you'll have some idea of what to expect. But the return of color isn't merely symbolic, either—with it grows the locals' will to fight. The game's producer, Tom French, explains: "Some people will help you hideout from the Nazis, tougher ones will join the Resistance, and eventually people will even begin fighting the Nazis when Sean does."

Paris, 1940: The Occupation



THINK *INDIANA JONES* NAZIS
The Saboteur straddles the line between fabricated fantasy and historical reality. The Germans didn't use Zeppelins during WWII, but you'll be chasing an adversary aboard this one as the airship burns.

NOTHING SUCKS THE LIFE OUT OF A TOWN LIKE NAZIS
Paris has been invaded and it's raining. Great. But your actions will turn the tide and return freedom (and color) to a once vibrant city.

BAC À SABLE
That's French for sandbox. *The Saboteur* features open sandbox gameplay with conditions: you're free to determine your path and actions within a particular district, but you will be funneled towards scripted events that advance the storyline and lead you to the next area.

It's personal

Devlin is no ordinary war hero either, he's a race car driver who only gets involved in the struggle against the Nazis after the murder of a friend. This isn't about a noble desire to save the free world; it's just cold hard revenge. Producer French compares Devlin to actor Colin Farrell. "Not so much the characters he's played in films, but more of his off-screen persona. They're both charming but have scrappy demeanors, smoke like chimneys, and could probably drink any of us under the table." He certainly sounds more fun than the usual bleeding-heart WWII rookies.

Of course Devlin's civilian background affects the way he fights. He can use a gun, but his lack of military training means he's much happier trading punches with baddies. As the game progresses Sean does become a more proficient marksman, but the sabotage nature of the missions means a trigger-happy approach is rarely the goal. The point, above all, is to liberate Paris using stealth. "In our missions we tend to employ a mantra of 'quiet in, loud out,' so it's in the player's best interest to go into an area quietly and escape the area as fast and efficiently as he can," says French, "usually under a hail of bullets!"

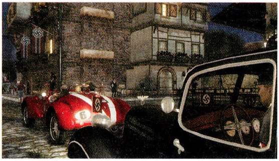
Roger Burchill

A Driven Man »

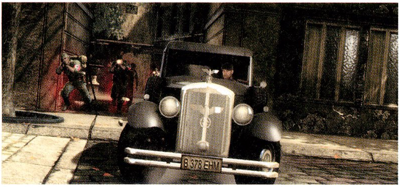
THE HERO: **Sean Devlin** is based on WWII-era race driver William Grover-Williams, who aided the French Resistance for the British military.

LOYALTIES: Sean's an Irish expatriate without patriotic or nationalistic fervor, but no friend to Nazis. He's a shade of gray in a black-and-white world.

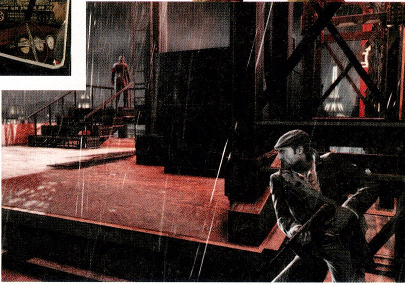
MOTIVATION:
Revenge.



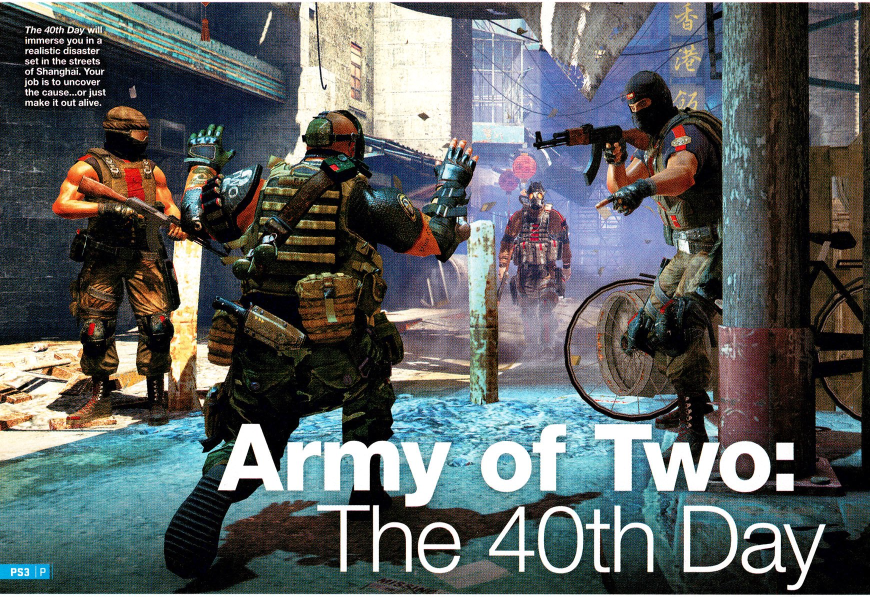
"Get in. We'll take my sports car to the rendezvous. But as I was saying, the key to being an effective operative is to blend in..."



Sean's combat skills will improve as he gains experience, but his driving abilities always reflect his racing credentials.



"Tourists. I hate tourists."



The 40th Day will immerse you in a realistic disaster set in the streets of Shanghai. Your job is to uncover the cause...or just make it out alive.

PS3 | P

Army of Two: The 40th Day

Deftly avoiding a potentially hilarious subtitle*

PS3 AVAILABLE: Late 2009 GENRE: Third-person Shooter PUBLISHER: EA Games DEVELOPER: EA Montreal

Salem is surrounded. Six enemies train assault rifles on his position, and all stand between him and the only way out. Calmly, he discards his weapon and steps into the open with his hands half-raised above his head. They command him to drop to his knees. At this point, Creative Director Alex Hutchinson leans over to his demo partner, Executive Producer Reid Schneider, and asks, "You ready? 3…2…"

As their countdown concludes, the two simultaneously unleash a surprise attack on the unsuspecting enemy soldiers, with Hutchinson pulling his concealed sidearm as Schneider snipes from the vantage point that he was able to reach while the guards were distracted. The firefight is short and deadly.

The "mock surrender" is just one example of the sort of tactics available in *Army of Two: The 40th Day,* but it exemplifies what this action game is all about: pure tactical co-op. While the aptly named franchise has always been about creating a game that's—as Hutchinson puts it—"co-op from the ground up," EA Montreal has decided to scale back the first game's arcade elements in favor of more strategic gameplay.

It takes two

Mostly notably, this subtle shift towards strategy has fostered the creation of a new tool called the Co-op Playbook. Despite the name, the Playbook is actually a digital vision device that provides you with information about your enemies when you highlight them with the crosshair and displays available co-op tactics—like mock surrender, co-op snipe, and hostage hold—that might be applicable in that particular situation.

You can also use it to tag someone as either an enemy or a civilian, which then allows your partner to see the person even when his line of sight is obstructed by a solid object. Hutchinson, for instance, was able to snipe a soldier through a wooden window-cover once Schneider established a visual and tagged the future dead guy as an enemy. Brutal.

The Playbook isn't the only new piece of the strategy puzzle. You

A Tale of Two Mercs

In keeping with the decision to move away from arcade-style gameplay and towards more serious strategy, the developers have chosen to take the story in a more realistic direction as well. The game will still star Elliot Salem and Tyson Rios—frat boys turned soldiers turned mercenaries—but will be set entirely in and around Shanghai during a major disaster. The developers compared it to living through the movie *Cloverfield,* though this disaster is man-made (think jet fighters bombing buildings), not supernatural. The atmosphere will be decidedly dramatic and serious, but the developers plan on keeping the humor of the first game, though they promise that Salem and Rios will be more likable and relatable this time around.

can now issue direct orders to your AI partner, and though you won't have total control over him, you'll have more influence than you did last game (and according to the developers, partner AI is now significantly more natural). Basic commands will be limited to passive and aggressive forms of advance, hold position, and regroup, but you'll also be able to issue contextually sensitive orders like stealth kills. Basically, your partner is more than a guy with a gun; he's a strategic weapon.

Despite all these opportunities for "pre-combat strategizing," the developers assured us that those who prefer to shoot first and ask questions later can still treat *The 40th Day* as a total run-'n'-gun action game, provided they don't mind losing a few hostages, civilians, and Trophies. Ultimately, the way you play is a choice, but regardless of how you approach a situation, teamwork and coordination will play essential roles.

Keep it simple, stupid

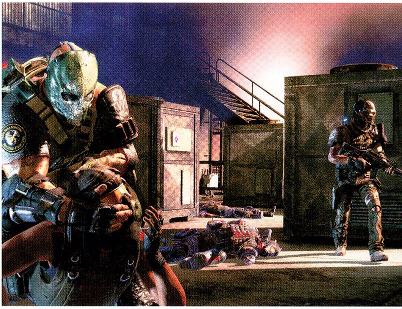
In addition to all the tactical upgrades, several improvements have been made to the game's more basic gameplay elements. The new organic cover system eschews button-based controls in favor of automatic contextual cover. Basically, if you approach a viable piece of cover, your character will intelligently attach himself to it.

In fact, the controls in general have been simplified. Melee attacks and grenades both have dedicated buttons now, the weapon selection system has been made more intuitive, and the functions of some buttons will change depending on context. The developers never wanted anything to be more than a single button press away.

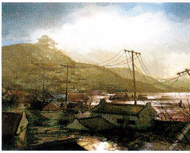
EA Montreal has also added the ability to sprint, use human shields, and temporarily pick up enemy weapons. Your health will no longer be displayed on the HUD, but rather, familiar blood splatter will begin to collect around the edges of the screen; take cover and it will begin to fade, but if it grows too intense, you're toast. Both weapon customization and the Aggro Meter—which indicates which of the two players the enemy is focusing on—return, but filling the meter entirely to one side will no longer result in Overkill Mode (take a guess how that works) on the grounds that it was simply too arcade-like. And finally, vehicle sections have been eliminated entirely—so no more hovercrafts.

Honestly, we were floored by the dramatic scope and detail of the world, and the on-the-fly strategizing clearly creates a powerful dynamic between the two players that will almost certainly result in a few, uh, memorable moments—especially since you'll be able to play the entire game in splitscreen. Just remember, don't beat up your real-life friend just because he let that virtual hostage die.

Scott Butterworth

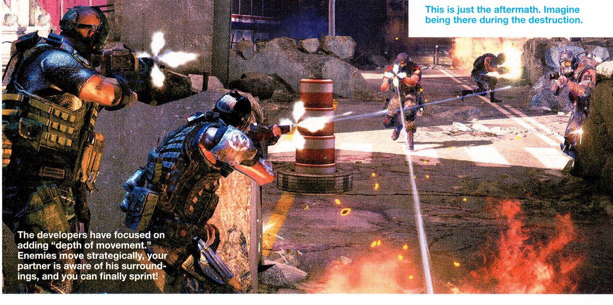


The game's not all neck-snapping and violent slaughter. Salem and Rios will now have "non-combat" states in which they raise their masks and actually act human.



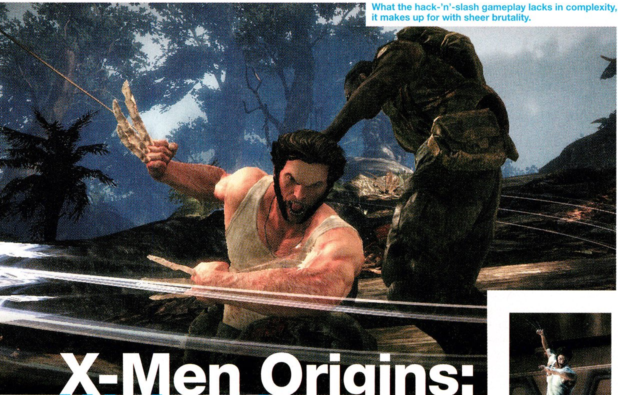
Tsunami? Flash flood? Sabotaged dam? Guess we'll find out...

This is just the aftermath. Imagine being there during the destruction.

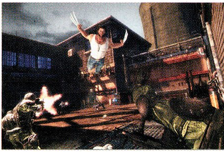


The developers have focused on adding "depth of movement." Enemies move strategically, your partner is aware of his surroundings, and you can finally sprint!

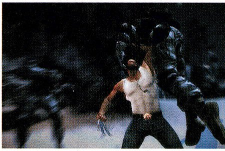
***Yes, we admit it.** In the PTOM office, we have been referring to the second *Army of Two* installment as "Army of Tutu."



What the hack-'n'-slash gameplay lacks in complexity, it makes up for with sheer brutality.



The Lunge Attack allows Wolverine to close in on gun-wielding enemies quickly and with deadly efficiency.

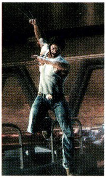


"And this is for letting me go out in the cold without a jacket!"

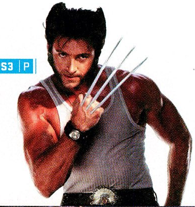
X-Men Origins: Wolverine

Hands-On Preview

And to think, paper cuts make *us* cry...



PS3 AVAILABLE: May GENRE: Action Adventure PUBLISHER: Activision DEVELOPER: Raven Software



PS3 | P

About the first time you decapitate an enemy with a Wolverine-signature uppercut (maybe 30 seconds in), you begin to suspect that *X-Men Origins: Wolverine* might not be just another movie-licensed game. Blood's spurting and body parts are flying, exhibiting a level of gruesomeness that certainly hasn't been a part of the *X-Men* film franchise. One thing's for sure: this isn't going to sit well with parents whose kids want the game 'cause they just saw the movie. Good.

Make no mistake, we're not expecting Professor X-level gaming genius here. Just something quick and easy to get into with a satisfying amount of gratuitous gore: the kind of thing *real* gamers can sink their teeth… er, claws into. For a movie-licensed game, that's a veritable evolutionary leap forward.

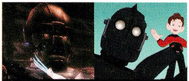
Raven Software had two goals during development: create a fast, fluid combat system and capture the true essence of Wolverine's regenerative capabilities. Our hands-on time revealed a straightforward fighting mechanic based on Light and Heavy combo chains. An attack's resultant effect and animation is dependent on where it lands on an enemy's body. It's a simplistic, but potentially satisfying scheme—but we'll see how we feel after the claimed 12 to 15 hours of total gameplay.

The regeneration process is wholly centered around the Wolverine character model, which consists of three layers: the skin, muscular tissue, and the skeletal base. The severity of a wound is evident by the amount and depth of the body's interior that's revealed. It's a bit gross to repeatedly see flesh torn away and grow back, but we can't imagine tiring of it.

Interspersed with the core buttonslashing gameplay will be dynamic set pieces that will inject some of the film's cinematic grandeur. Besides the showdown against our gargantuan robot buddy (see sidebar), we got a peek at the Wolverine versus helicopter sequence being teased in the movie trailer and a flooding tunnel escape, presumably from the secret Alkali Lake facility. Wolverine jumping from truck-to-truck and fending off rockets before a looming tsunami of doom sounds like good fun to us.

Yup, we'll see the movie, but this time we might actually want to play the game, too.

Roger Burchill



Irony

The Iron Giant's new gig or his evil twin separated at birth? We take a closer look at Wolverine's huge new nemesis.

What we know:

- He's big: approximately 250-feet tall.
- He's a boss: you'll be battling for at least 20 minutes.
- He's memorable: sure to be a highlight game moment.

What we don't know:

- His name: The devs say he's "someone you don't know right now."
- His grudge: What's he got against Wolverine anyway?
- His personal life: Who's he dating? We think LiLo.

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Bi Xie
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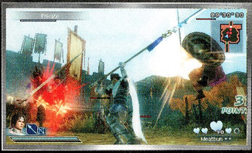
Pirate
23'30"30
Meatbun ++

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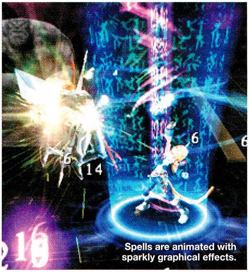
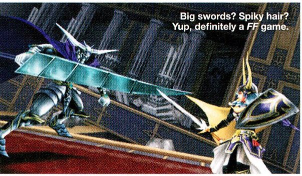
The good vs. evil storyline is a central part of this unusual fighting game.

現在を貫く　それだけだ



Spells are animated with sparkly graphical effects.

Talk, talk, talk. Dialogue-heavy cutscenes abound.



Big swords? Spiky hair? Yup, definitely a *FF* game.

PSP | P

Dissidia: FINAL FANTASY

A mish-mesh of *Final Fantasy* mash-ups

PSP AVAILABLE: September GENRE: Fighting PUBLISHER: Square Enix DEVELOPER: Square Enix

THE CONCEPT FOR *DISSIDIA* came about during the development of the first *Kingdom Hearts*, when the team toyed with the idea of creating an all-star *Final Fantasy* cast set in the *Kingdom Hearts* battle system. And the idea just grew from there.

Forget the whole Cloud versus Sephiroth obsession. Isn't it time some other *Final Fantasy* villains had a chance to throw punches at the spiky-haired hero? Imagine Cloud against Jecht, or against *Kefka.* Imagine *Squall* against Sephiroth, or Terra against Ultimecia. For many *Final Fantasy* fans, the upcoming PSP game *Dissidia: Final Fantasy* will be matchmaking heaven: you'll be able to pit some of your favorite *FF* characters against each other and then participate in those battles—either against the computer AI or locally against a friend who also owns a copy of the game.

Brave attacks

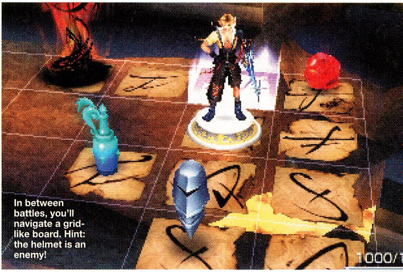
In a (Zeio) Nutshell, *Dissidia* is a one-on-one fighting game in interactive 3D environments featuring customizable *Final Fantasy* heroes and villains. Characters will swing familiar weapons (like the Buster Sword) and fling recognizable spells, as they dash and leap with exaggerated flourish through the fantastical levels. But a few key traits make this more than just a mere fighting title.

For one, the battle system is a bit convoluted. Characters have health bars, and yes, like in other fighting games, the point is to get those health bars from full to empty, but it's not just a matter of smacking away at an enemy's HP. Instead, you first have to deal with a new mechanic called Brave Points, which are displayed as numbers above the health bars.

Brave Points determine how much damage your HP attacks do. Both characters begin the battle with a certain amount of BP. But as you do special BP attacks (you'll have several to pick from, and you can customize them to hotkeys), you steal your opponents BP. When his BP reaches zero, he will "Break," and be susceptible to HP attacks—at the same time, you'll earn all the BP in the Brave Pool (which you can see as a number in between the characters' health bars), meaning any HP attack performed at this point will be extremely powerful. You can even empty out the opponent's full health bar with a single hit.

Of course, since this is a *Final Fantasy* game, that's just the surface of the

Terra Branford: beautifully transformed from 2D sprite to 3D model.



In between battles, you'll navigate a grid-like board. Hint: the helmet is an enemy!

battle system. There's also an EX Gauge (which, when full, allows your character to transform, like Terra becoming an Esper), several reflex-based mini-games (mostly quick-time events), items that you can use in battle (summons!), and of course, attacks will perform differently depending on whether you're on the ground or in the air. This breadth of variety should lend itself to different offensive and defensive strategies.

Board of destiny

It's unexpected that a fighting game would have puzzle elements, but *Dissidia* does. In between battles, your character will be placed on a gridded board, with treasures, potions, and enemies all portrayed by little icons. You'll be given a certain number of Destiny Points, which basically act as movement points, and you'll have to navigate that board (ideally collecting all the goodies) using only the allotted number of Destiny Points if you want to earn a bonus at the end of the stage.

It'll get more complicated as you progress. For example, obstacles block parts of the board and you have to destroy a particular enemy before proceeding, forcing you to move out of your way to engage that enemy. Fortunately, you can earn back Destiny Points if you perform certain conditions in battles, such as destroying your opponent within 10 seconds.

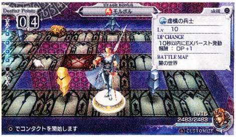
Customizable characters

You didn't think this would be a *Final Fantasy* title without character progression, did you? The opposite, actually. *Dissidia's all* about character customization and progression. You'll earn experience points in battles and level up. You'll equip weapons and armor. You'll tweak stats, browse accessories, organize your hotkeys, and spend gil. And of course, this will all directly affect how you approach your battles.

So, in the end, the first *Final Fantasy* fighting game seems less like a straight-up fighter and more like an RPG expressed in fighting game form. But since it features some of my favorite *FF* characters (and I've already got several fantasy matches planned out in my head) and since I can't resist leveling up, I'm optimistic.

Teresa Dun

The environments in *Dissidia* have an open, mystical feel.



SHHH! DON'T TELL, but the developers let slip in an interview that the English version of *Dissidia* will have a brand new Arcade mode, which the Japanese version doesn't have. Score! (But you didn't hear it from me.)

THE STORY AND CAST OF *DISSIDIA*

Story is the least important element in most fighting games, as you've no doubt witnessed from the absurd plots in games like *Street Fighter* and *Soulcalibur*. But what about an RPG-inspired fighting game?

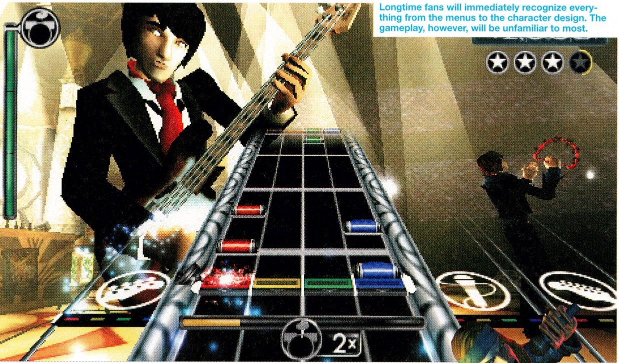
In *Dissidia*, there's a plot to explain the random mishmash of characters. Cosmos (the goddess of harmony) and Chaos (the god of discord) are ancient enemies who've battled throughout history, with neither side ever gaining an advantage. In an attempt to tip the scales in his favor, Chaos rounds up the villains from the *Final Fantasy* games to join him. He starts winning, so in response, Cosmos calls upon the good guys in those same games to aid her. And thus, *Dissidia: Final Fantasy* is born.

In the hands-on time I had with the Japanese build of the game, I noticed the usual array of cutscenes you find in fighting games, but I also noticed significantly more dialogue between battles. The stories of all the separate games seem connected, but I'll need a final English copy of the game before I can judge whether the story transitions smoothly or is as awkward and disjointed as other fighting games.

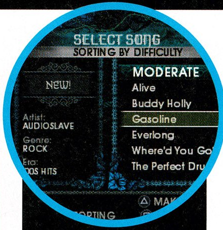
In the meantime, here's a list of all the playable *Final Fantasy* characters in *Dissidia*:

GAME	HERO	VILLIAN
Final Fantasy	Warrior of Light	Garland
Final Fantasy II	Firion	The Emperor
Final Fantasy III	Onion Knight	Cloud of Darkness
Final Fantasy IV	Cecil Harvey	Golbez
Final Fantasy V	Bartz Klauser	Exdeath
Final Fantasy VI	Terra Branford	Kefka Palazzo
Final Fantasy VII	Cloud Strife	Sephiroth
Final Fantasy VIII	Squall Leonhart	Ultimecia
Final Fantasy IX	Zidane Tribal	Kuja
Final Fantasy X	Tidus	Jecht
Final Fantasy XI	Shantotto	-
Final Fantasy XII	-	Gabranth

Bonus Trivia: Tetsuya Nomura (character designer) wanted to include Kain from *Final Fantasy IV*, but he didn't make the cut. The developers also wanted to include Lightning from *Final Fantasy XIII*, but since *FF XIII* is still in development, they decided it wasn't a good idea.



Longtime fans will immediately recognize everything from the menus to the character design. The gameplay, however, will be unfamiliar to most.



Rock Band Unplugged

Hands-On Preview

Let's take this show on the road!

The Songs So Far

AFI – Miss Murder *
AUDIOSLAVE – Gasoline *
BLACK TIDE – Show Me the Way *
FREEZEPOP – Less Talk More Rokk *
THE KILLERS – Mr. Brightside
QUEENS OF THE STONE AGE – 3's & 7's
SYSTEM OF A DOWN – Chop Suey!
TENACIOUS D – Rock Your Socks *
3 DOORS DOWN – Kryptonite *
ALICE IN CHAINS – Would? *
BLINK 182 – What's My Age Again *
JUDAS PRIEST – Painkiller
NINE INCH NAILS – The Perfect Drug
NIRVANA – Drain You
WEEZER – Buddy Holly
BON JOVI – Livin' on a Prayer
THE POLICE – Message in a Bottle
JACKSON 5 – ABC *
KANSAS – Carry on Wayward Son
THE WHO – Pinball Wizard

* Denotes a track exclusive to the PSP console for a limited time.

PSP AVAILABLE: June GENRE: Rhythm/Music PUBLISHER: MTV Games DEVELOPER: Harmonix/Backbone Entertainment

PSP | P

No, you don't tilt your PSP to activate Overdrive. Bummer!

Sadly, *Rock Band Unplugged* will not come with tiny, adorable instruments. Instead, developer Harmonix has decided to draw upon its early (and highly underrated) efforts *Frequency* and *Amplitude* and turn you into a one-man band. Unlike the console versions of *Rock Band,* you'll control all four instrument tracks over the course of a single song, manually shifting between the various lanes while trying to nail note phrases to keep any one of the tracks from dropping too low.

Naturally, the fastest way to fail a track is to miss all the notes as you attempt to play it, but if you simply ignore a track for too long, it will start to drop all on its own. As a result, the game becomes a frenzied balancing act that forces you to constantly seek out and save your weakest track while the song marches relentlessly forward. The rock meter on the left of the HUD and on-screen cues from the game help you gauge your performance, but ultimately, your own skill and awareness are all that can save the song.

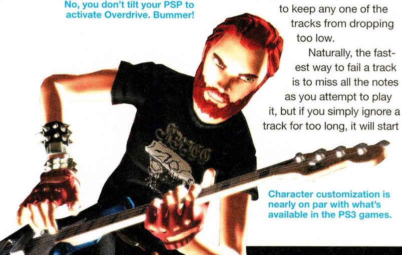
Aside from this new lane-changing mechanic, the game will be immediately familiar to veterans of the franchise. Though the strum bar has been eliminated, the vocal chart will be presented as notes rather than words, and the number of buttons has been reduced from five to four, your main goal is still to rhythmically match a series of notes as they scroll down the screen towards you, using any four of the PSP's face and directional buttons (hooray for customizable controls).

The World Tour mode is also nearly identical to that of the PS3 game—allowing you to create a custom band, hire staff, and tour 24 cities and venues playing various preset and custom set lists—but two new quickplay modes have been added: Band Warm-up—which lets you focus on a single track rather than balancing all four—and Band Survival—in which the unplayed tracks are constantly dropping, creating a more intense juggling act.

Musically, *Rock Band Unplugged* features 41 songs (nine of which are exclusive to this game) and will offer the first ever wireless online commerce system for a PSP game in North America. The in-game store will closely resemble its PS3 bigger brother and will contain 10 tracks upon the game's release.

Though we didn't get to check out the store, we did have a chance to play a few songs. And trust us, tackling a *Rock Band* game on the PSP isn't immediately intuitive, but the experience quickly becomes both refreshingly different and totally addictive. Be sure to check back for our review next month!

Scott Butterworth



Character customization is nearly on par with what's available in the PS3 games.

LIGHTS, CAMERA, ACTION!

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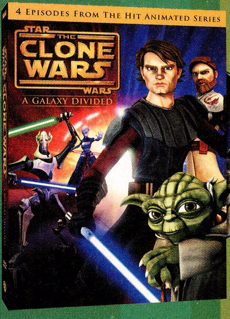

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EA SPORTS
FIGHT NIGHT

I suppose getting pummeled on the ear by Tyson is better than being bitten. No word if the bite move is Tyson's hidden "dirty" tactic.

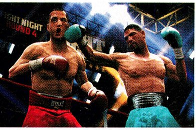
Fight Night Round 4

Hands-On Preview

PS3 | **P**

Here's your punch line...

PS3 GENRE: Sports AVAILABLE: Fall PUBLISHER: EA Sports DEVELOPER: EA Canada



According to the developers, one of the team programmers wrote into the judging algorithm the potential for a judge to miss punches: "as he looks away from the fight to his score card, he could miss something." But that was considered just a little much, and so the judges award rounds based on the official rules of judging.

Gloved fist connects with jaw at devastating speed: what happens? You've seen it in movies where you know the effects are faked; maybe you've seen YouTube videos, or worse, found yourself on the wrong end of a debate resulting in the kind of slap down normally reserved for those *Friday Night Fights* on HBO. We can attest, having sparred a few rounds with the PS3 build of *Fight Night Round 4,* that when fist meets chin as you accidentally duck into a devastating hook, you'll feel it. The game is playing with fluidity to match its oh-so-real looks, and is shaping to deliver some of the most devastating fighting action… possibly ever.

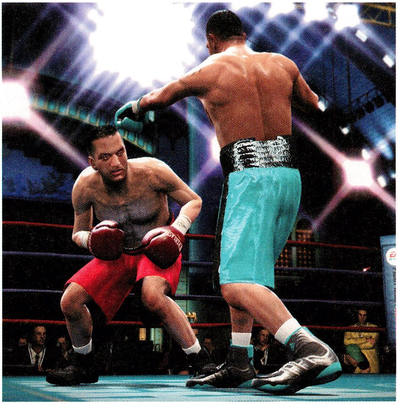
Speed and fidelity is what we took away from our multi-round bouts. Speed in the body sways and moves, and the devastating punches; speed in the transition between animations. Fidelity in the way that a fist will roll over an opponent's torso, mapping its contours as the glove misses its target, but never clipping into the opponent the way you'd reasonably expect in a videogame. Fidelity in how every move you make, every jab, every haymaker, impacts your stamina in the beautiful balance of aggression and health conservation.

The on-screen impact is impressive in itself. If you played the "original" next-gen *Fight Night Round 3* you'll know it would be hard to top those extraordinary visuals. So the detail in *Round 4* shouldn't be a surprise, but will likely still elicit a few "woahs" as each punch rattles your own bones as the rumble effects jolt your hands. You'll also likely duck for cover (or grab for a towel) as blood, snot, and sweat leap off the pummeled heads. According to the developers, they actually toned down the volume of junk flying off the fighters from "realistic" levels as it was just too much!

Using the Left- and Right-analog sticks to move around the ring, sway, bob, and throw punches is surprisingly intuitive. After just one round I started to make better moves, anticipate my opponent's blocks, and established the jab range. The face buttons are used for each fighter's signature move (Ricky Hatton winds up his left hand before unleashing a huge right, Manny Pacquiao sways wildly, hands by his side) and clinches, should you need to give your guy a breather after a beating. A few dirty tactics are also possible if you need to get an edge!

Gonna Be A Contender

While taking any of the 49 real-world boxers in the ring will be



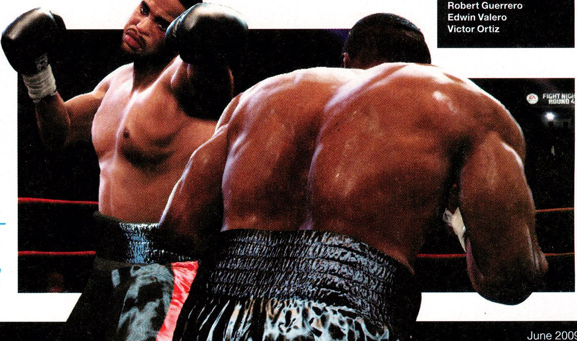
Eight weight classes (up from five in *Round 3*) are now covered, allowing a little more movement for your boxer to make his name at a couple of levels.

the initial draw, earning your own name will be possible with a hugely expanded Legacy mode. First, why not import your own beautiful visage into the game courtesy of the Photo Game Face, apply a signature punch, and choose from one of the seven basic boxing styles. Now the road to glory starts as a prospect at the Amateur Tournament where you'll start to earn respect. It's possible to drop a rank—to Bum—if you're a perennial loser, but the goal is to step up to club fighter on the path to Legend. You do that by identifying boxers you want to fight, scheduling the bout (or accepting an incoming request), and training like you mean it. You can undertake the training regimen yourself as it's all geared to improving your in-ring moves and punches.

Working up that ladder, you'll see your abilities in a vast number of different stats improve, allowing you to cherry pick the perfect opponents to improve your ranking. The Legacy mode can also come to a glorious end with your retirement as a superstar (or having achieved your own set goals).

Of course, taking your boxer online is going to be a massive draw as the depth of detail should mean that those who work their tactics, use their strengths, and don't just try to go for the knockout punch every chance should rise to the top. However that shapes out, it's clear that *Fight Night Round 4* is an incredibly complete package that has the depth and playability to make it accessible to all gamers, whether they can recite Emanuel Augustus' exact record or couldn't name any real-world pugilists. We can't wait for this smackdown to begin.

Rob Smith



A Quick-Time Event system is used to put some skill into your ability to get up from a knockdown. You'll need to use the stick and hit certain buttons to get a bar into the middle, and gradually pull yourself upright as the countdown is called out.

Wanna Fight?

All the confirmed boxers to appear in *Fight Night Round 4*, with others potentially added through DLC.

Mike Tyson
Muhammad Ali
Ricky Hatton
Ray Robinson
Thomas Hearns
Miguel Cotto
Shane Mosely
Jake Lamotta
Marvin Hagler
Roy Jones Jr.
Carlos Monzon
Jermaine Taylor
Kelly Pavlik
Manny Pacquiao
Pernell Whitaker
Julio Cesar Chavez
George Foreman
Joe Frazier
Lennox Lewis
Ray Leonard
James Toney
Roberto Duran
Marco Antonio Barrera
Amin Asikainen
Paulie Malignaggi
Kermit Cintron
Eddie Chambers
Arturo Gatti
Corey Spinks
Tommy Morrison
Sergio Mora
Fernando Montiel
Jorge Armando Arce
Arementa
Anthony Mundine
Emanuel Augustus
Vinny Paz
Vivian Harris
Billy Dib
Diego Corrales
Erik Morales
Nate Campbell
Ronald "Winky" Wright
Yuriorkis Gamboa
Nonito Donaire
Arthur Abraham
Joe Calzaghe
Robert Guerrero
Edwin Valero
Victor Ortiz

Want to know what a real punch in the face looks like? Check out this, courtesy of the Discovery Channel: http://tinyurl.com/cw2qt9

PlayStation Gallery

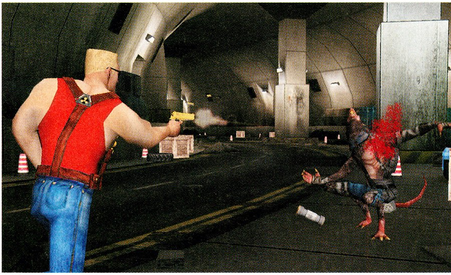
Updates, sneak peeks, works-in-progress

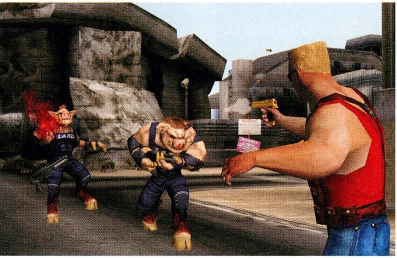
Duke Nukem Critical Mass

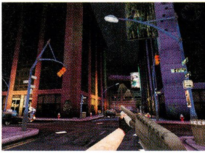
First Look

PSP AVAILABLE: Fall GENRE: Action
PUBLISHER: Deep Silver DEVELOPER: Frontline Studios/Apogee Software

In the last 10 years *Duke Nukem*, once synonymous with powerhouse franchises like *Doom* and *Unreal,* has slowly, painfully receded into the ether, the poster child for game industry vaporware. But while *Duke Nukem Forever* (the apparently mythical sequel to 1996's *Duke Nukem 3D)* remains the butt of old, old jokes, the fun-loving flattop will get a portable outing this fall. This PSP game sports classic third-person action gameplay. Guns, a jetpack, and the trademark (for those that remember) attitude are all part of the package as Duke fights off more pig cops. Douglass





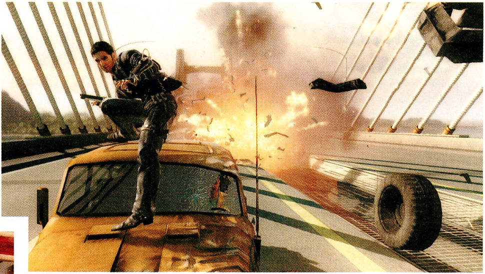


Just Cause 2

Update

PS3 AVAILABLE: Late 2009 GENRE: Action/Adventure
PUBLISHER: Eidos/Warner Bros. Int. Ent.
DEVELOPER: Avalanche Studios

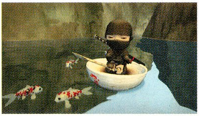
What's this now?! Didn't we just look at *Just Cause 2* last issue? Well, with a bevy of Hollywood-high-action-ish game vehicles *(inFamous, Uncharted 2, X-Men Origins: Wolverine, Prototype,* etc.) set to come down the pipe, *Just Cause 2* still manages to stand out by being even more outrageous and over-the-top than its brethren, and this latest batch of screenshots has our trigger fingers itching. C'mon, a continuously redeployable paraglider, a grappling hook that'll fling you *and* kill enemies, and more weapons than a NRA convention in Iraq—what's not to like? Driving a car off a bridge and parachuting to a Harrier jet to hijack it remains high on our To-Do list. Roger



Call of Juarez: Bound in Blood First Look

PS3 AVAILABLE: June GENRE: Action
PUBLISHER: Ubisoft DEVELOPER: Techland

Westerns may be having a bit of a renaissance in gaming, despite Activision deciding not to pursue its *Gun* franchise. As we wait for news on Rockstar's *Red Dead Redemption,* feast your eyes on the latest entry in old west gameplay (from a Polish dev team, via its French publisher) in the sequel to last year's *Call of Juarez.* This new game is actually a prequel and will earn all of its Mature rating through its bloody action gameplay and frontier language. More player options are planned, along with a new and improved Concentration mode, all rounded out with a polished multiplayer component for quick-draw gunslingers. Douglass



Mini Ninjas First Look

PS3 AVAILABLE: Fall GENRE: Adventure
PUBLISHER: Eidos DEVELOPER: IO Interactive

Usually when we start gushing about a game's graphics it's all about how realistic and life-like a game looks, so props to *Mini Ninjas'* art director for coming up with a lush, animation-style look that's both beautiful and distinctive. The storyline about a bottom-of-the-rung ninja named Hiro called upon to stop an evil samurai warlord bent on world domination has its charms, but we're a little concerned that the cute ninjas exhibited more personality in screenshots than they did in our first peek of the game. Hats that can be used as vehicles or shields and an arsenal of ninja weapons, moves, and spells should add some welcome gameplay wrinkles, but an infusion of *Pucca*-inspired quirkiness would help keep *Mini Ninjas* from disappearing into the shadows. Roger

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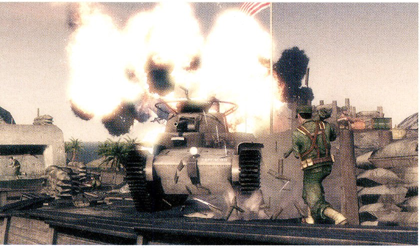


Battlefield 1943 First Look

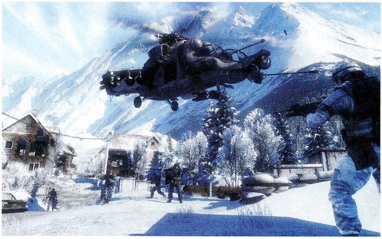
PS3 AVAILABLE: Summer GENRE: Combat Action
PUBLISHER: Electronic Arts DEVELOPER: DICE

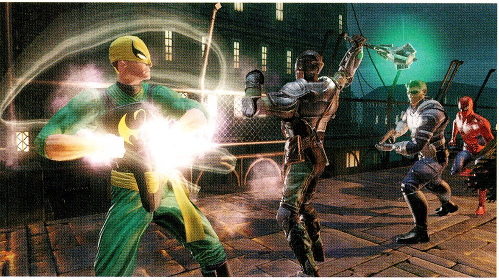
Trying a different tack, DICE is bringing its "premium arcade title" to PSN this summer as a "competitively priced" downloadable-only game. We played the multiplayer level based on the small Pacific island of Iwo Jima, giving us access to aircraft carriers, personnel boats, airplanes, tanks, jeeps, and a whole lot of multiplayer combat goodness. Douglass

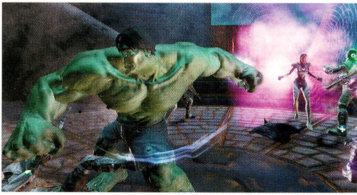
Battlefield: Bad Company 2 First Look

PS3 AVAILABLE: Winter GENRE: Combat Action
PUBLISHER: Electronic Arts DEVELOPER: DICE

The original *Bad Company* was a surprisingly adept and well-written war game that delivered some sparkling dialogue inbetween the destructive action moments. This sequel plans to ramp up each of its core tenets—team play, online vehicle warfare, large open environments, and the destruction, of course—to the proverbial 11. Count on DICE's Frostbite engine to deliver more multiplayer vehicles that exhibit better control and more realistic physics, and more micro and macro destruction in a franchise that provides a quality challenge to Activision's dominant *Call of Duty* series. Douglass



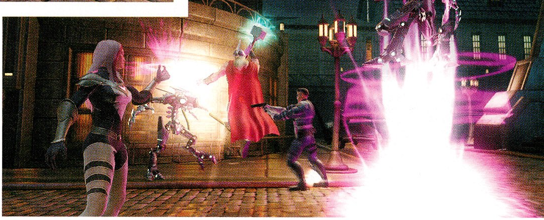




Marvel Ultimate Alliance 2 First Look

PS3/PSP AVAILABLE: Fall 2009 GENRE: Action RPG
PUBLISHER: Activision DEVELOPER: Traveller's Tales

Marvel's Civil War comic-book storyline has proved to be a huge hit with fans, and that continuity is being tapped for this much-anticipated action-RPG sequel. Some 24 playable characters will push the co-op gameplay focus as they combo attack into some 250 new powers. The original game provided terrific fan service, and with expanded four-player co-op (we expect local and online options) we have high hopes. Douglass



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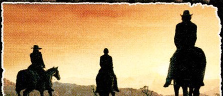
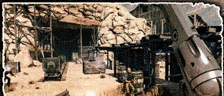
THE OLD WEST, 1864. In order to save their family, the McCall brothers will kill anyone who stands between them and the legendary Gold of Juarez. Though women and greed will test their bond as brothers, the blood they share will prove to be thicker.



Experience a story full of greed, lust, and lawlessness

Choose to embody Ray or Thomas, each with a distinctive gameplay style



Online multiplayer with unique modes, maps, and classes for hours of Wild West action

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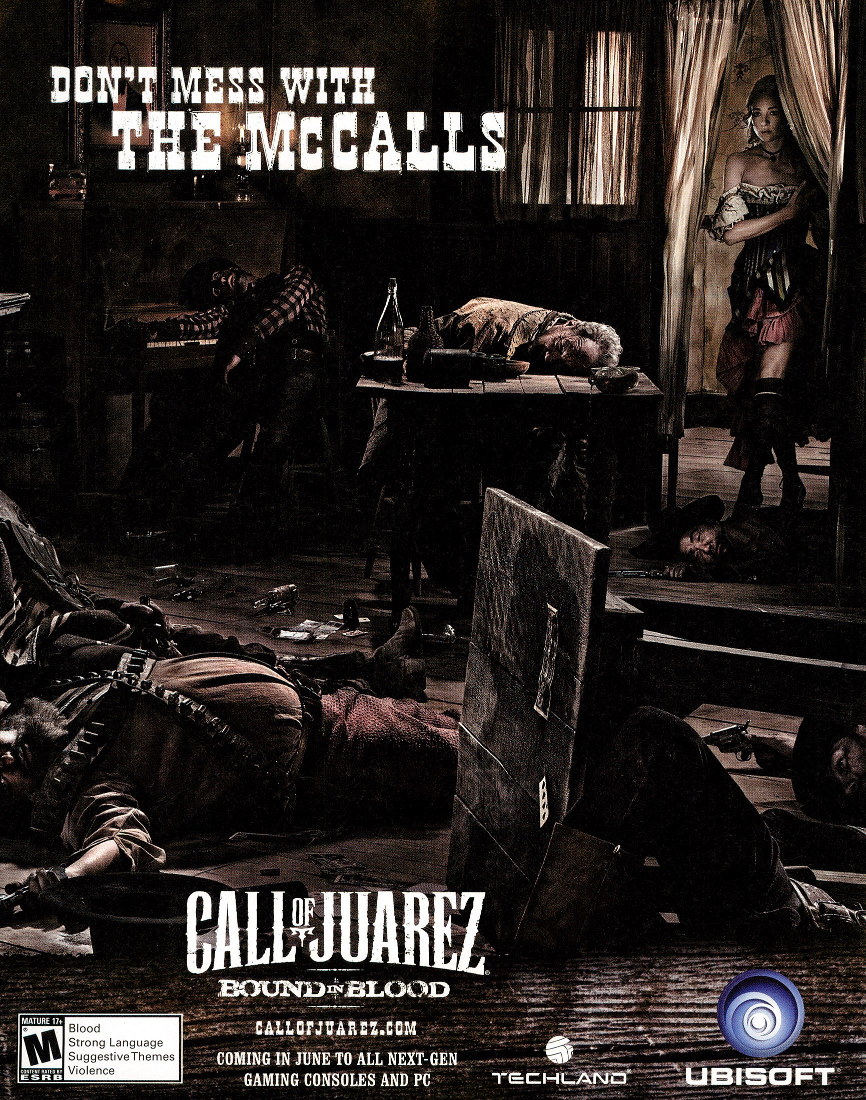
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PS3 | Available: June | Genre: Action | Publisher: Eidos/Warner Bros. Int. Ent. | Developer: Rocksteady

BATMAN: ARKHAM ASYLUM

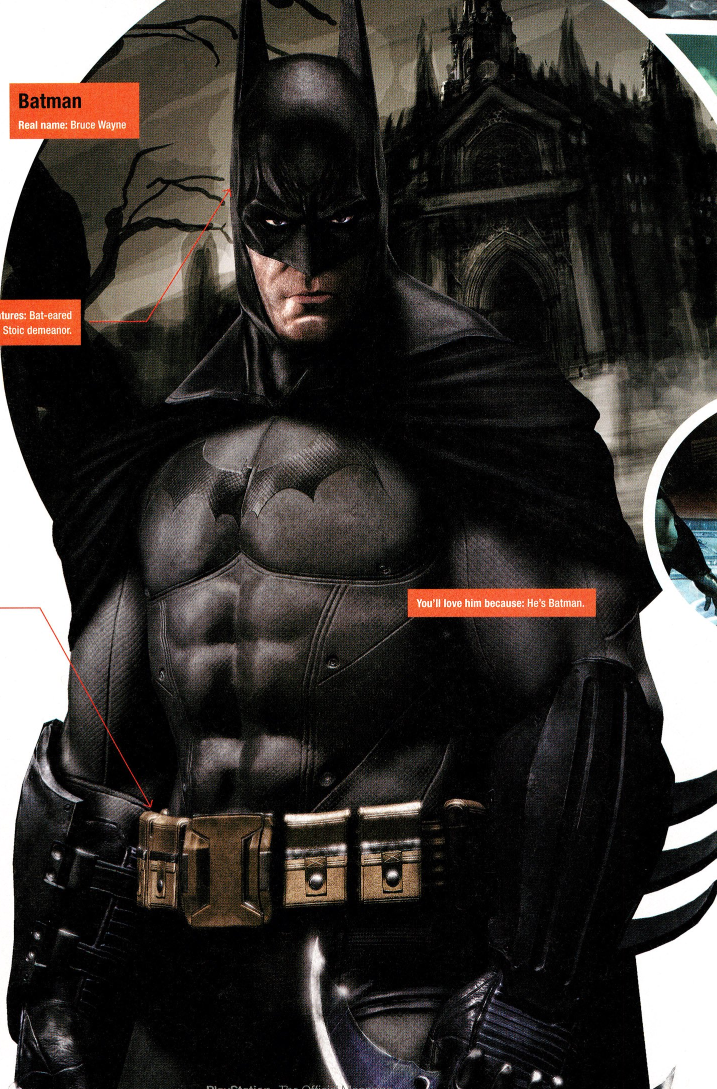
A PTOM EXCLUSIVE

Did Heath Ledger's blistering performance as Joker in *The Dark Knight* give you an itch to put yourself in those psycho clown shoes? Indulge your inner supervillain? Well on PS3—and ONLY on PS3—you can, courtesy of *Batman: Arkham Asylum's* challenge mode. We traveled to developer Rocksteady's serious house in serious Highgate, North London to be the very first to play as Joker, and get the full story on the *Batman* game set to provide a delicious mix of action and adventure gaming amid a world expertly crafted to respect the DC universe and its denizens.

SOMETIMES IT'S ONLY MADNESS THAT MAKES US WHAT WE ARE.

"You're in the real world now and the lunatics have taken over the asylum."*

*Joker, greeting Batman in *Arkham Asylum: A Serious House on Serious Earth*



Batman

Real name: Bruce Wayne

Distinguishing features: Bat-eared helmet/face cover. Stoic demeanor.

You'll love him because: He's Batman.

WONDERFUL TOYS: Upgrades to the starting weaponry include several variants of the batarang including:

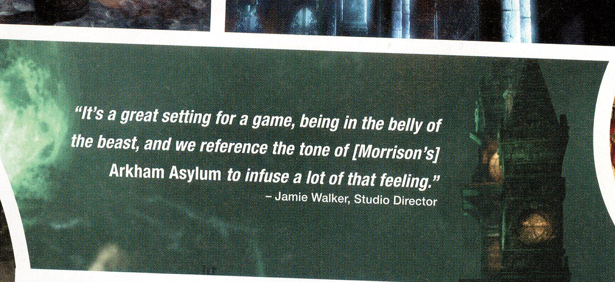
Triple batarang—throws three projectiles at three targets.

Sonic batarang—tuned to frequency of Joker's thugs' suicide collars. Stick this to a surface, and as the guards come to investigate make it go boom!

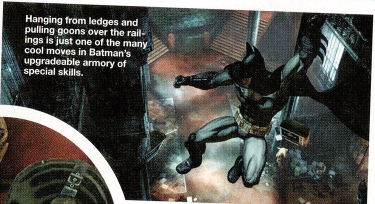
Remote control batarang—take control and fly this projectile straight to your chosen target.

Explosive gel—Spray the bat symbol on a weakened wall, then detonate from safety (taking out any enemies who might be in the vicinity).

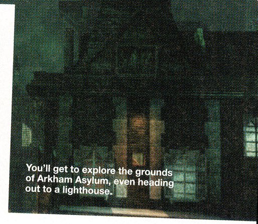
Cyber-sequencer—when you're a detective, even one so physically powerful, a helping hand from technology to access keypads and electronic devices will make quick work of some puzzles.



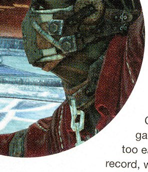
> **"It's a great setting for a game, being in the belly of the beast, and we reference the tone of [Morrison's] Arkham Asylum to infuse a lot of that feeling."**
> – Jamie Walker, Studio Director



Hanging from ledges and pulling goons over the railings is just one of the many cool moves in Batman's upgradeable armory of special skills.



You'll get to explore the grounds of Arkham Asylum, even heading out to a lighthouse.



WELCOME TO THE MAD HOUSE

Most definitely the lunatics *have* taken over the asylum. Batman is, understandably, suspicious. He points out to Commissioner Gordon that Joker gave in to capture just that little bit too easily. And given Arkham's security record, where breakouts and escapes are way too commonplace, mischief is clearly afoot. But while the game is set deep inside the most complete recreation of the infamous mental healthcare facility in comic book history, *Batman: Arkham Asylum* is its own story, and takes its own rightful place in DC universe lore.

"It's true that it's 'ungameable'," says Sefton Hill, the game's creative director, of *Arkham Asylum: A Serious House on Serious Earth,* Grant Morrison's genre-bending graphic novel that delved into the history of the place, as well as the crazed psychology of its inhabitants (and visitors, in Batman's case). "But it's a great setting for a game, being in the belly of the beast," adds studio director Jamie Walker, "and we reference the tone of [Morrison's] *Arkham Asylum* to infuse a lot of that feeling." If you're familiar with the graphic novel, you'll have a tiny head start in recognizing the significance of the cryptic symbols etched into the floors, or the propensity for beetles to scurry around each environment.

For the development team, crafting a cohesive Asylum was less straightforward than you might expect. No true floorplan exists, despite its appearance in numerous movies and comic books. "It's true that we're creating DC continuity," says Walker, "because the game is more in-depth than the comics or films. Each room of Arkham Asylum has to be mapped to make sense in an interactive game world, where the movie can stitch together locations on a whim." So Rocksteady's setting provides that required cohesive progression from the entryway, through security rooms, the library, and cells, and even outdoors into the botanical gardens surrounding this austere building.

COME ONE, COME ALL

Jamie Walker is quick to point out that this *Batman* game is not based on any movie license. In fact, the studio was working on a first-person shooter when they learned of Eidos signing a deal with Warner Brothers to work on the studio's properties. Rocksteady won the resulting pitch and work began on a design that was then shepherded by DC Comics according to Walker "to ensure there was no inadvertent crossover with *[The Dark Knight]* movie." Though in development for two full years, the game was fully playable within five months. "You could play it start to finish before we even saw a frame of the film," says Hill. But this separation of game and film is not so much defensive positioning as it is establishing that *Batman: Arkham Asylum* is its own standalone beast.

"We want to make sure there are details that people unfamiliar with the characters will enjoy, for those who don't know all the back story and aren't *au fait* with the graphic novels," says Walker. Aside from the nods and winks to that material, the game includes an absolute mountain of unlockables that provide insight and background to all the characters. The wheelchair-bound Oracle (Commissioner Gordon's daughter, Barbara) provides intel as Batman seeks out Joker and his crazy comrades in crime, and you can find out how she ended up in the chair by reading the detail included on her bio card. There are 42 of these character bios to unlock that showcase exclusive artwork by art studio Wildstorm (headed by longtime DC artist Jim Lee) and hints on how you might combat some of the larger denizens, deep in the vaults.

SEFTON HILL
Ranked #37 on *Edge* magazine's recent list of Hot 100 Game Developers of 2009 list.
http://tinyurl.com/cqvup2

Keeping it Rocksteady

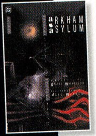
The two directors of four-year old studio Rocksteady have seen the tough side of videogame development. Jamie Walker and Sefton Hill were gainfully employed (Hill as Creative Director) at Argonaut Games, an established, storied UK studio that went out of business in 2004. Walker and Hill setup the new studio in north London with its own unique culture. Walker performs more of the studio management while Hill—who ranked #37 on *Edge* magazine's recent list of Hot 100 Game Developers of 2009 list (see http://tinyurl.com/cqvup2)—serves as creative director on the game.

Walker outlined the company culture built on four areas: professionalism, quality, efficiency, and treating people well. The first three are all self-explanatory—have a professional attitude, produce high quality work, and do it in an efficient manner. The last? "We have a weekly questionnaire on happiness that our employees fill out," says Walker. Whether it's where someone sits in the very open-plan office space (even the company principals share the open area with all 60-plus employees working on *Arkham Asylum)* or the quality of the coffee ("it's really good," says Walker, "and that helps make sure I get to the office early"), each comment is read and efforts made to address them. "Only six people have chosen to leave the company since we started," says Walker, adding "though others have left for not fitting in or not getting it done."

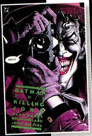
This commitment to a unique but professional culture is clearly a source of pride to Walker as he notes that in its four years, the studio has not missed a single milestone. That's a crucial statistic considering with each hit milestone comes a check from the publisher, and Walker's assertion that 90-percent of the company's costs go on staff salary, a missed milestone would undermine the ability to offer the benefits from this "treat people well" philosophy.

Essential Batman Reading

Get up to full speed with some of the best Batman and Joker showdowns in these graphic novels.

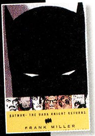


Arkham Asylum: A Serious House on Serious Earth
Writer: Grant Morrison
Art: Dave McKean
First published: 1989
What You Need To Know: Sound familiar? The lunatics have taken over the asylum. Joker lure's in Batman to witness a psychological power play that's creepy and powerful without anyone getting physically hurt. The mental trip is matched perfectly by phenomenal art.

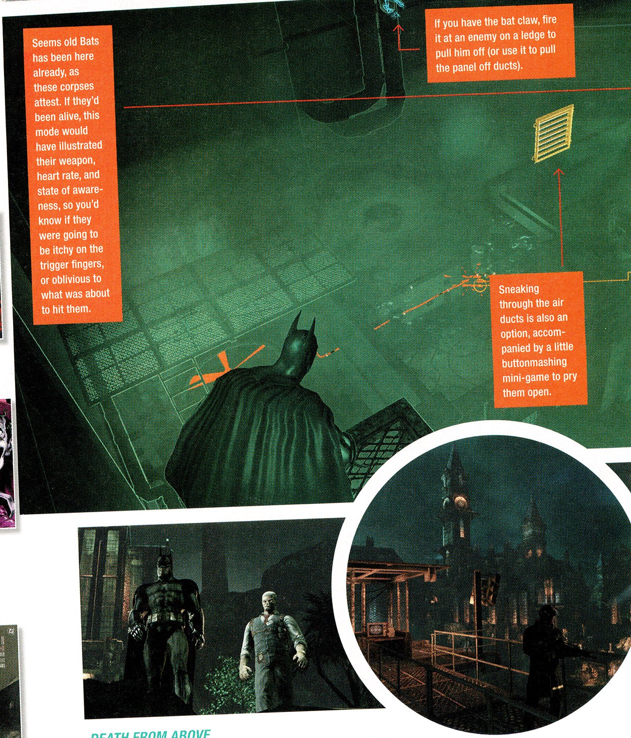


Batman: The Killing Joke
Writer: Alan Moore
Art: Brian Bollard
First published: 1988
What You Need To Know: Some brutal—and disturbing—moments and images make *The Killing Joke* one of the most important (and highly regarded) Batman graphic novels ever. It provides the backstory as to how Oracle (who provides Batman with information on Arkham Asylum throughout the game) came to be in a wheelchair (which also ended her role as Batgirl). And the entire event is one long, beautiful setup to a simple joke!

Batman: Hush
Writer: Jeph Loeb
Art: Jim Lee, Scott Williams
First published: 2002
What You Need To Know: This newer series packs in plenty of *Batman* universe villains that you'll see in the game. Killer Croc, Harley Quinn, Joker, Harvey Dent, and more all make appearances (along with Superman, for that Gotham/Metropolis crossover moment), so it's a good way to get caught up if you're new to these characters.



Batman: The Dark Knight Returns
Writer: Frank Miller
Art: Frank Miller, Klaus Janson, Lynn Varley
First published: Feb. 1986
What You Need To Know: One of the best-selling graphic novels of all-time sees Batman coming out of retirement and facing Joker in an epic showdown…we'll save the kicker in case you've never heard the story, but it's one of DC's best. The art style is tighter and smaller than some of the bolder images in newer graphic novels, but the plot and themes are truly compelling.



Seems old Bats has been here already, as these corpses attest. If they'd been alive, this mode would have illustrated their weapon, heart rate, and state of awareness, so you'd know if they were going to be itchy on the trigger fingers, or oblivious to what was about to hit them.

If you have the bat claw, fire it at an enemy on a ledge to pull him off (or use it to pull the panel off ducts).

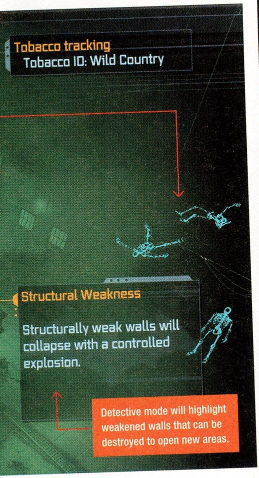
Sneaking through the air ducts is also an option, accompanied by a little buttonmashing mini-game to pry them open.

DEATH FROM ABOVE

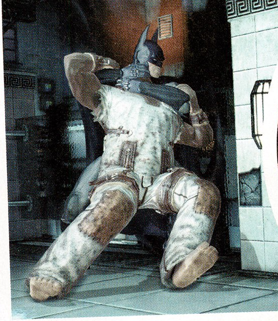
Playing in third-person perspective lets you see all the environmental detail, which is vital given the detective element of the gameplay. Sure, pummeling goons in a combo-fueled beat-'em-up format is par for the course for Batman, but accessing the detective mode, scanning the environment for bad guys, points of interest, and escape routes adds impressive depth to the gameplay. Casting a blue sheen over the environment, this mode highlights enemies through walls and outlines the gargoyles leering in the ceilings that provide perfect observation perches and the launch pad for silent strikes. Grappling from perch to perch puts the emphasis on Batman's stealth abilities. Sure, he can drop to the floor and run at the goons, but later in the game when they turn up armed with shotguns or tasers, that tactic will result in a quick save reload.

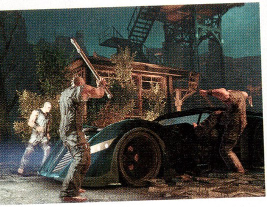
"It's not just about stealth, though," says Hill of this mechanic, "but his detective side." That means using the mode to search out power switches or to figure out the code to type into a keypad. Early in the game, as you pursue Dr. Young who has been captured by Joker and carried off into the depths of the asylum, after scanning in detective mode you'll find a trail of green fingerprints pointing the way.

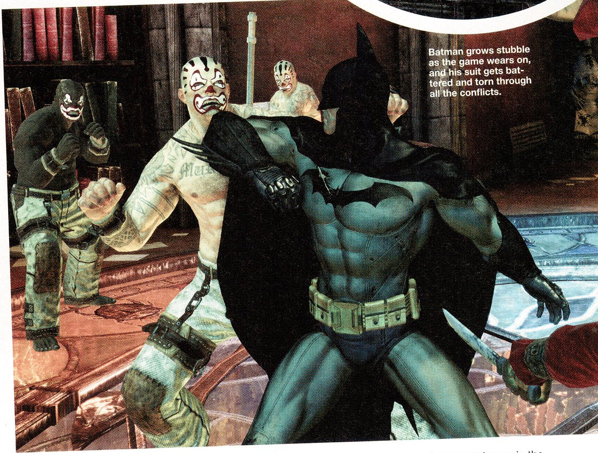
One of its most creative uses is finding The Riddler's question mark symbols. Some 240 riddles are concealed throughout the environment, but finding them isn't simply a case of switching on detective mode and looking all around. If you spot the curved top part of a question mark, is the dot directly below it? Possibly not. You'll have to move around the space, locate the dot, and then line it up correctly to form the question


Tobacco tracking
Tobacco ID: Wild Country
Structural Weakness
Structurally weak walls will collapse with a controlled explosion.

Detective mode will highlight weakened walls that can be destroyed to open new areas.







Batman grows stubble as the game wears on, and his suit gets battered and torn through all the conflicts.

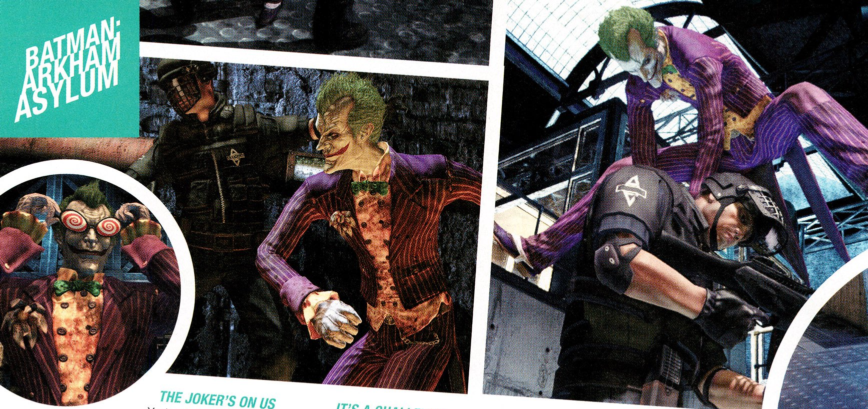
mark in order for it to trigger that the riddle is "solved." Solving each riddle could earn a character Trophy or an interview tape with some of the famous inmates.

BATMAN: EVOLVED

For several reasons the Batman you play at the start of the game will be quite different from the one that emerges (presumably victorious) at the end. Eagle-eyed fans of the game may have noticed in screenshots how Batman's costume gets battered and torn, and how the caped crusader even begins to sport a little unkempt stubble. Plus, finding secrets and surviving encounters will result in virtual bats fluttering to an experience meter, indicating that you've earned points towards leveling up. It's an RPG-lite system that lets you flesh out Batman's powers how you want by focusing on health or armor or special grapple moves and more. It's hard to imagine that dropping inverted from a gargoyle to grab and dispatch a goon in silence will ever get old. That's one of the skills you can unlock.

That's in addition to the estimated 50 to 60 different combo attacks you'll be able to execute as you add new skills and items. Of course, with the extra skills come bigger challenges, both from the strength and ability of your enemies and also the environment. High security thugs are armed with knives, so getting too close is dangerous. You'll have to stun them first (in combat each of the face buttons correlates to strike, counter, stun or redirect combat effects). You'll need to flip over taser-armed guards to get behind them and strike, adding another layer to combat maneuvers.

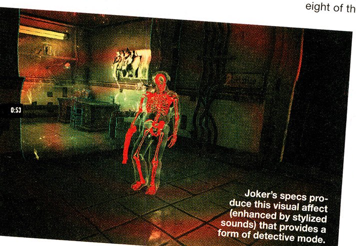
While moving from one set-piece combat situation to the next might appear from early looks at the game to be the core mechanic, be assured that there's plenty more going on in the background yet to be unveiled. How about a segment where you're in young Bruce's shoes witnessing the murder of his parents? Yep, these vignettes, be they playable or merely cutscenes flesh out Batman's motivation for anyone that hasn't seen the movies or read every DC comic book. They also hint at much greater depth to the whole experience than the superficial combo-focused combat implies. Batman is a complex character delving into a place of deep psychological torment. From what we've seen, it's clear the developers haven't forgotten those crucial factors as they craft a core action-adventure experience. Playing *as* Joker is only one piece of the evidence to support that statement…



THE JOKER'S ON US

Yeah, yeah, yeah. Casting yourself as Batman is a plenty great way to spend your gaming hours. But donning the crazy boots of one of comic-dom's most revered supervillains could be worth the price of admission alone. Throughout the single-player game you'll be chasing his shadow, witnessing his ramblings on projection screens and monitors, and hearing him direct his goons to your location, or to capture and dispatch any of the facility guards unfortunate enough to be captured. At some point (we'll guess the end) Batman and Joker will come face to face in a boss battle. Up to that point we'll be hanging on each stylish vignette. "Joker is not killing for killing's sake, but for show and to manipulate an effect" says Hill, "and when he talks you want to hear what he has to say."

Throughout the single-player portion Joker has dropped chattering teeth (if Batman batarangs them all, it earns a trophy) and dotted his minions throughout the complex, including snipers in the outdoor areas, and varying numbers of thugs throughout the rest of the asylum. Among the unlockables earned by pursuing the cackling crazy are Challenge maps, and right from the get-go, on the first one you unlock, you'll be able to dive in as Joker and play with his own set of wonderful toys.



Joker's specs produce this visual affect (enhanced by stylized sounds) that provides a form of detective mode.

IT'S A CHALLENGE

The Challenge maps are single location encounters that pit Batman or—*exclusively on the PS3,* oh yes—Joker against various hoodlums with the goal of clearing the level as fast as possible, with as many points as possible. You play several rounds of increasing difficulty to score as high as you can, and have those scores posted online in worldwide leaderboards.

One early example is a straight pit fight: Batman enters, as do three goons. By stringing together combos, and beating them down fast, you'll earn points. Round two of the same challenge adds a couple of guys, ditto for round three. Icons over the enemies' heads indicate when you can counter their attacks. The encouragement (through set challenge objectives, like "get a 6x combo" or "pull a guy off a ledge when you're hanging from it") to use specific combos both teaches you the techniques you earn in the single-player game and earns bigger points. So at the start of the game, in the first challenge, scoring 3,000 points seemed like good work. But armed with more combo attacks (so you're encouraged to go back and play the early Challenge maps after unlocking these new skills in the single-player portion) a score around 35,000 would still trail the best on the leaderboards.

Of the 16 total maps, you can play as Joker in eight of them. Adding further challenge there are also eight variants of those same maps that add in more enemies and more difficulty!

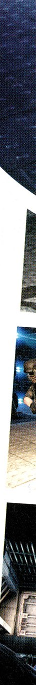
GO NUTS

Of course, Joker has his own unique takedown moves. He does swing and dodge a little slower than Batman in melee combat, so that will require an adjustment to your play style. He doesn't have the grapple, which is vital to keeping Batman out of harm's way. And he doesn't have a detective mode to tap into at will to get an instant lay of the land.

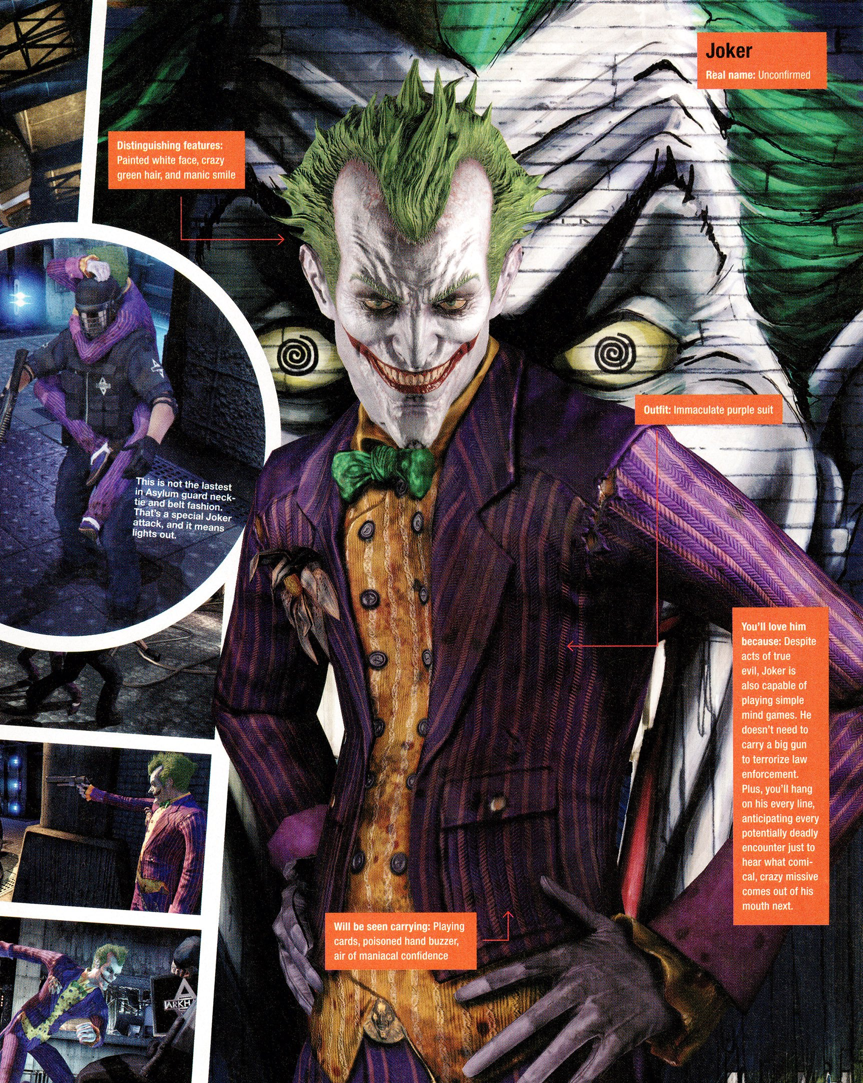
However, he does have wits, and he does have some extra-special glasses that cast an orange and green swirling effect over the environment when worn, and lo!—endowing Joker with a form of detective mode, letting him see guards through walls, etc. (The guards facing off against Joker, incidentally, are some of the characters from the single-player game, so you'll get to beat up Commissioner Gordon and some of the red shirt-like characters). Joker can hang from ledges like Batman, and he has his own gadgets that are earned in the single-player game.

One big advantage for Joker: a gun. It has a very slow reload, and its aiming felt imprecise (on purpose) in our playtest, but it's a unique skill not available to Batman. Indicative of the care taken by Rocksteady to infuse each element of this experience with an interactive "coming to life" of the comic book characters is evidenced in some of Joker's animations with the gun. Try to fire behind you and he won't turn, but will shoot over his shoulder. To the left he might fire from under his left leg rather than turning. It looks cool, it flows in character, and doesn't hinder the gameplay challenge. Unique Trophies for Joker include hitting three targets with one bullet. Line 'em up, and pull the trigger!

Other weapons include the explodable teeth that act like a smart gun. They'll attract guards with their chattering…and then with perfect timing, explode to take them out. Joker also has a gas attack and, of course, will no doubt keep the enemies (or you) off guard with his one-liners. Comically good times.



According to Jamie Walker, the team worked with a lot of fight experts to fine-tune the combat system. "You don't block in a fight with multiple enemies," he says of the learning experience, and so the system of redirects and counterattacks evolved.



Joker

Real name: Unconfirmed

Distinguishing features: Painted white face, crazy green hair, and manic smile

Outfit: Immaculate purple suit

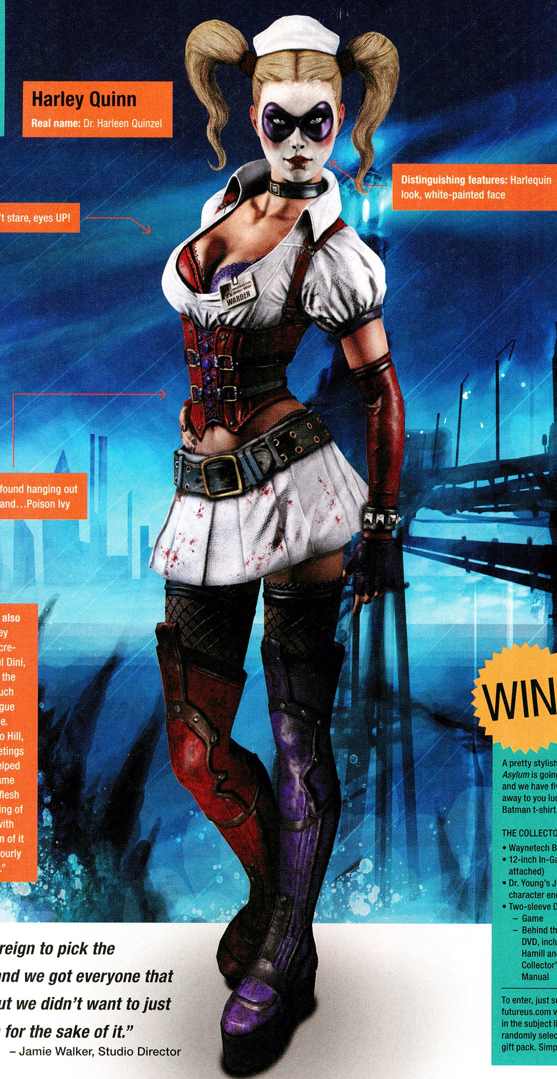
You'll love him because: Despite acts of true evil, Joker is also capable of playing simple mind games. He doesn't need to carry a big gun to terrorize law enforcement. Plus, you'll hang on his every line, anticipating every potentially deadly encounter just to hear what comical, crazy missive comes out of his mouth next.

Will be seen carrying: Playing cards, poisoned hand buzzer, air of maniacal confidence

This is not the lastest in Asylum guard necktie and belt fashion. That's a special Joker attack, and it means lights out.

Harley Quinn

Real name: Dr. Harleen Quinzel



Distinguishing features: Harlequin look, white-painted face

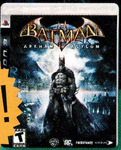
Outfit: Don't stare, eyes UP!

BFF: Often found hanging out with Joker and…Poison Ivy

You should also know: Harley Quinn was created by Paul Dini, who is also the writer of much of the dialogue for the game. According to Hill, several meetings with Dini helped build the game rooms and flesh out the pacing of the game, with the intention of it reaching "hourly crescendos."

> *"We had free reign to pick the antagonists, and we got everyone that we wanted. But we didn't want to just throw them in for the sake of it."*
>
> – Jamie Walker, Studio Director

WIN!

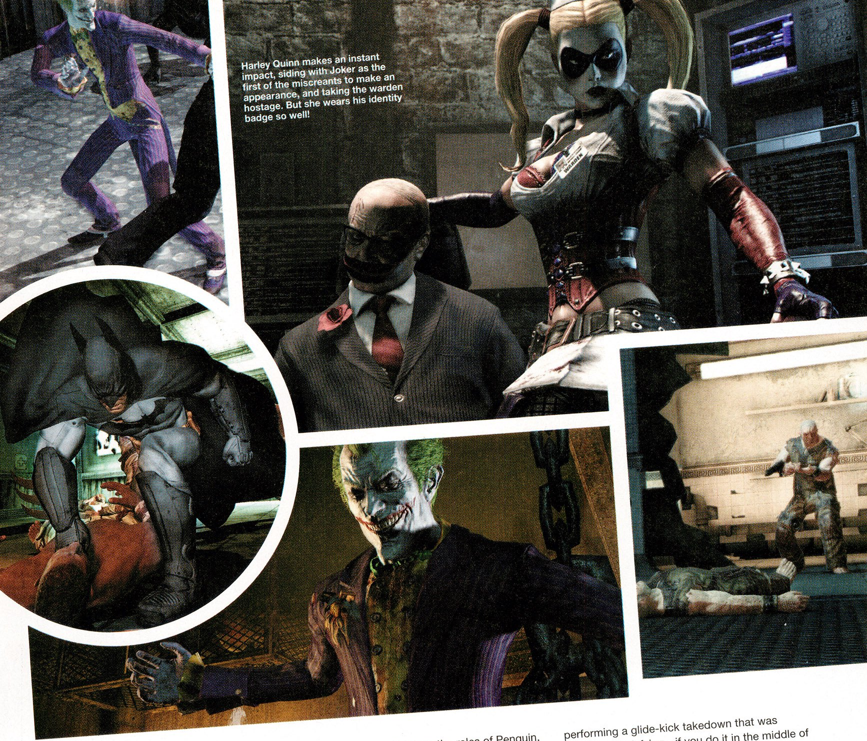


A pretty stylish Collector's Edition of *Arkham Asylum* is going to be available at launch, and we have five of these $100 packs to give away to you lucky, lucky people, along with a Batman t-shirt.

THE COLLECTOR'S EDITION INCLUDES:

- Waynetech Batarang Storage Box
- 12-inch In-Game Design Batarang (stand attached)
- Dr. Young's Journal (50-page full color character encyclopedia)
- Two-sleeve DIGI-Pack Including:
  - Game
  - Behind the scenes five chapter series DVD, including: interviews with Mark Hamill and Kevin Conroy, exclusive Collector's Edition Challenge map DLC, Manual

To enter, just send an email to PTOM_Letters@futureus.com with the words "Joker PS3 FTW" in the subject line. We'll have Carlos the Intern randomly select five folks who will get the gift pack. Simple.



Harley Quinn makes an instant impact, siding with Joker as the first of the miscreants to make an appearance, and taking the warden hostage. But she wears his identity badge so well!

BRING A FRIEND

Once inside Arkham, with the help in his ear of Oracle, the exact progression of Batman's mission has yet to be revealed. Let's face it: it's to get Joker, to get out, and to not get killed. That all starts by pursuing Dr. Young, but we know that several of Joker's closest supervillain buddies are also housed in the facility and capable of exacting their own brand of evil hurt on the caped one. Which ones? Well, we know of Killer Croc, for sure. We know The Riddler has to be present. We strongly suspect Poison Ivy to play her own flirtatious role. But beyond that? Well, we have imdb.com to thank for discovering that the line-up of villains seems to be a veritable Who's Who of DC universe badness.

All Hill and Walker would confirm was that they had "free reign to pick the antagonists," says Hill, "and we got everyone that we wanted." "But we didn't want to just throw them in for the sake of it," adds Walker, "but to give them significant roles." What imdb.com suggests is that voice actors were hired for the roles of Penguin, Scarecrow, and Mr. Freeze, as well as those already revealed.

No doubt they'll all introduce unique challenges. And that was a core realization after spending a full day investigating each corner of the asylum (the Arkham one, not Rocksteady's office): *Batman: Arkham Asylum* is jam-packed with content and brimming with options, variations, opportunities, and challenges. What at first seemed like a stylish, well-intentioned action adventure is packed to the gills with cool objects to find, cool characters to reveal, cool dialogue to hear, and cool action sequences to enjoy.

There's more to Batman's role as the silent predator, his aggressive stealth combat style, than just beating up hoods. As the game progresses, those handy gargoyle-head hiding spots can suddenly be booby-trapped (no, that doesn't mean you'll find Harley up there… we don't think). You'll be challenged to actually think about your tactics, as we discovered while performing a glide-kick takedown that was extremely satisfying—if you do it in the middle of several gun-toting enemies, they'll cut you down in a flash. The compelling Challenge mode maps will help train you to use all the tools in your arsenal. Even the trophies are crafted to encourage you to use multiple combos (there's a Trophy if you get all nine different attack types into one combo!)

But it's not just the yet-to-be-revealed roster of villains that will pull you deeper into the mad house. "We saw Arkham as a character itself," says Hill, "You go there and it's run by guards, you go back and it's covered by snipers, and later it's taken over by someone else." Sure it's a serious house, but it's shaping to be an utterly compelling experience that blends all the right ideas for getting the most out of the inspirational source material while investing it with its own creative, content-packed gameplay moments. And on PS3, we get to play as the Joker, and who's not going to want to give that a go? ■

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CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Blood
Strong Language
Violence

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PlayStation Network

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Platform: PS3

AVAILABLE: Fall

GENRE: First-person Shooter

PUBLISHER: 2K Games

DEVELOPER: 2K Marin/2K Austrailia

BIOSHOCK 2

no gods. no masters. no escape.

by scott butterworth

You are a Big Daddy. That's right, no self-indulgent build up, no contrived ploy to manufacture anticipation. Just pure, unshakable truth: In *BioShock 2,* the main protagonist—which is to say, the character that you control—is a Big Daddy.

For some of you, this is a heart-stopping revelation. You've read that first paragraph a few times now, and though you instantly grasped the meaning, you still don't know if you believe it. But for those of you who missed the first game, let me explain.

The original *BioShock* succeeded for many reasons. With a deeply literary narrative and remarkably eclectic gameplay, it offered one of the deepest videogame experiences, well, ever. But perhaps its greatest accomplishment was the world it created: Rapture, an awe-inspiring underwater city brimming with 1940s grandeur...until it all went wrong.

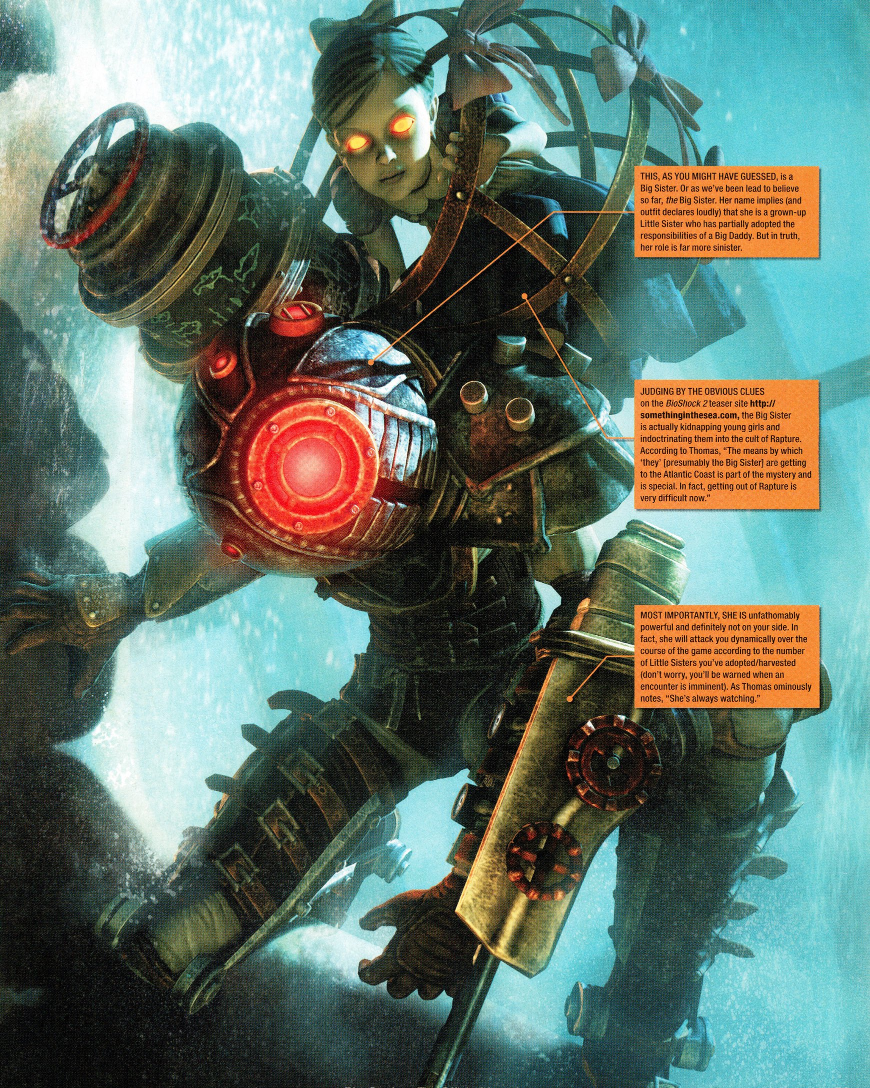
Though the city was intended to be a laissez-faire utopia for the world's greatest minds, it was eventually consumed by a civil war sparked by, among other factors, the denizens' lust for ADAM, a synthetic substance that could be used to purposefully alter one's genes.

Of course, the supply of ADAM could never meet the demand, so once the production system collapsed during the war, a vicious food chain emerged that relied on three key players: the ADAM-addicted Splicers, who would stop at nothing to get a fix; the brainwashed Little Sisters, who would collect ADAM from the dead; and the hulking Big Daddies, who would protect these Little Sisters with their brute strength and size.

In the first game, you played an unsuspecting outsider dropped into this twisted ecology with no real understanding of what was at stake. But now, nearly a decade after the conclusion of the original story, you will experience Rapture from a radically different perspective: that of a Big Daddy.

However, you aren't just any Big Daddy. You are the first Big Daddy, the prototype on which all others are based. And this, of course, has a few very important implications. You are not a mindless bodyguard but an actual human being. You are smart, mobile, and—most importantly—capable of using plasmids (genetic weaponry made possible by ADAM).

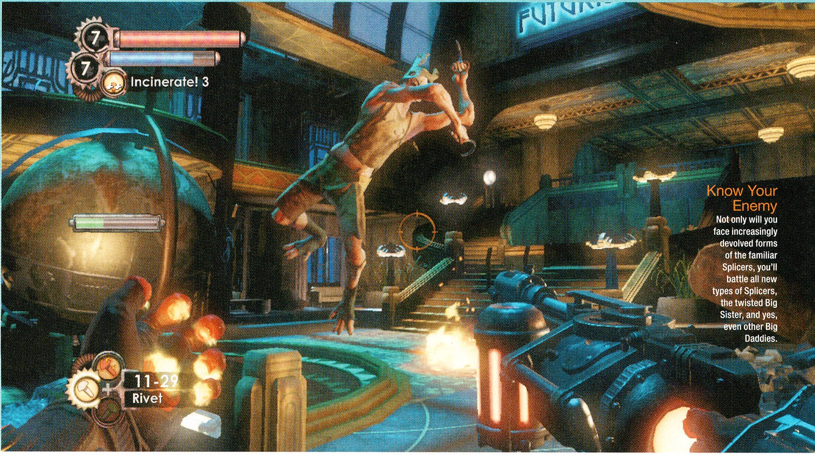
But where did this character come from, and where was he during the events of the first game? And what has become of Rapture in the years since its conclusion? We had to know. So we journeyed up the coast to 2K Marin where Creative Director Jordan Thomas shared with us a breathtaking demo and patiently answered all of our questions. The truth, readers, lies ahead.



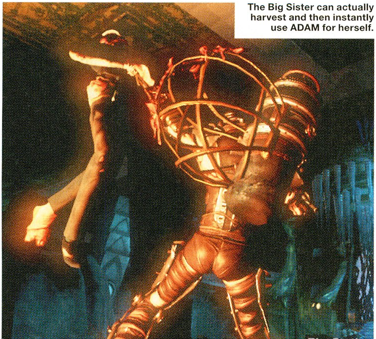
THIS, AS YOU MIGHT HAVE GUESSED, is a Big Sister. Or as we've been lead to believe so far, *the* Big Sister. Her name implies (and outfit declares loudly) that she is a grown-up Little Sister who has partially adopted the responsibilities of a Big Daddy. But in truth, her role is far more sinister.

JUDGING BY THE OBVIOUS CLUES on the *BioShock 2* teaser site **http://somethinginthesea.com,** the Big Sister is actually kidnapping young girls and indoctrinating them into the cult of Rapture. According to Thomas, "The means by which 'they' [presumably the Big Sister] are getting to the Atlantic Coast is part of the mystery and is special. In fact, getting out of Rapture is very difficult now."

MOST IMPORTANTLY, SHE IS unfathomably powerful and definitely not on your side. In fact, she will attack you dynamically over the course of the game according to the number of Little Sisters you've adopted/harvested (don't worry, you'll be warned when an encounter is imminent). As Thomas ominously notes, "She's always watching."



Know Your Enemy
Not only will you face increasingly devolved forms of the familiar Splicers, you'll battle all new types of Splicers, the twisted Big Sister, and yes, even other Big Daddies.



The Big Sister can actually harvest and then instantly use ADAM for herself.

"Hello? Hello?! You can hear me, yes? Wake up! Your time for sleeping is over." 30 watts of disembodied voice crackles through the darkness, thick with static and some indiscernible accent. Tenenbaum.

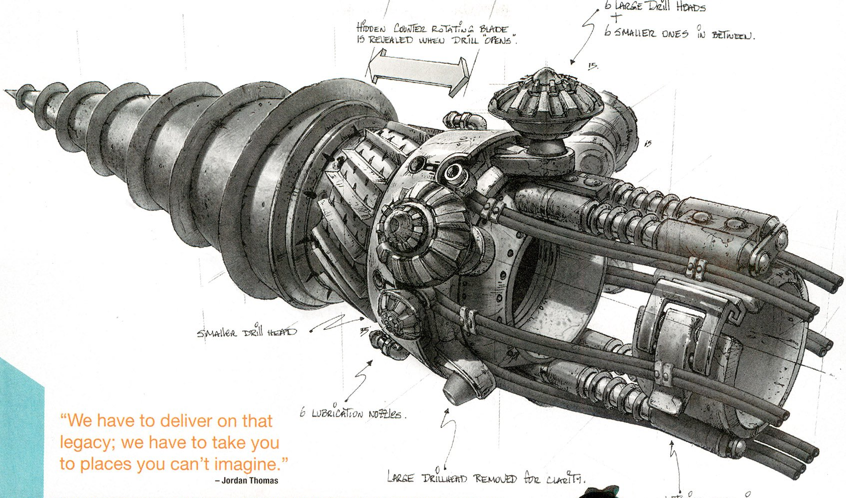
Jordan Thomas, Creative Director

"Our thesis statement for this game was to bring new mystery to Rapture, to bring you back to the setting that was so compelling but to surprise you in terms of both the choices that you're going to make this time and also the way in which the play experience has evolved. So this time around, we pretty much need to trust you with tougher choices both in the narrative space and in terms of shaping your character. We also feel like there's a kind of unity between the *BioShock* story and the systems of play that are underneath that story. We have to deliver on that legacy; we have to take you to places that you can't imagine."

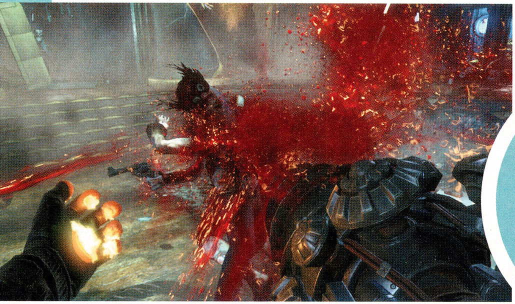
As your vision clears, you are greeted by your own reflection: your head encased in a green-glowing diving bell, your hands shoved deeply into watertight gloves. You are staring at a Big Daddy.

JT "Being the first Big Daddy means that you are very much a part of Rapture's history. You were there at some pretty key events, and during the year that took place essentially from 1960 onward, you were elsewhere. We're taking great pains to create the right kind of intersection with the story of *BioShock* one, rather than making it complicated and hard to parse. Who you are and how you got there and your involvement with Rapture's history is a key part of the mystery of *BioShock 2,* and so yeah, you start well after the events of the first game. But you then go through a process of discovering what happened to you... If this was just a pure prequel or a pure sequel, it really wouldn't be surprising enough to you."

The distant echoes of a familiar nursery rhyme rise up to meet your ears as you stumble slowly towards a gaping hole in the derelict floor. Beneath you, a gang of Splicers loiters anxiously, muttering broken nonsense about ADAM, the genetic substance that fuels their violent, self-inflicted insanity. The


6 LARGE Drill HEADS
+
6 SMALLER ONES IN BETWEEN.
HIDDEN COUNTER ROTATING BLADE IS REVEALED WHEN DRILL "OPENS".
15
SMALLER DRILL HEAD
35°
6 LUBRICATION NOZZLES.
LARGE DRILLHEAD REMOVED FOR CLARITY.
LATCHING MECHANISM.

> "We have to deliver on that legacy; we have to take you to places you can't imagine."
> – Jordan Thomas

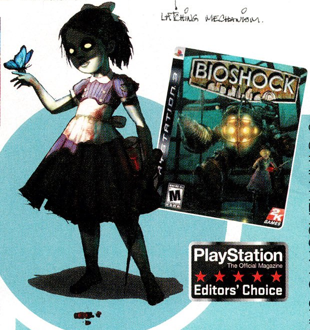


camera shakes as your feet reach the floor.

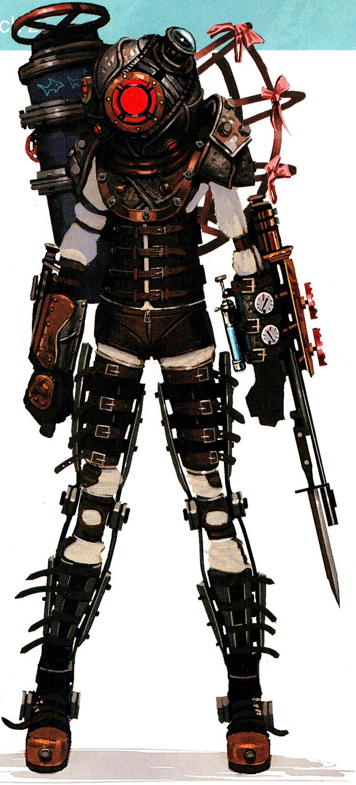
JT "Big Daddies have their advantages; they're kind of the ultimate survivor. So you start with a core sense of power, but you'll face many new threats and you'll have to grow your character pretty steadily to keep pace with these threats… Because you're this incredible badass, because you've got the X-Men in your left arm and the marine corps in your right, there has to be something out there that is tougher than you are, something that can take down a Big Daddy. Garden-variety chumps really need to gang up to pose a threat to you."

In a near panic, the Splicers frantically launch an offensive, but of course, their efforts will be meaningless. You bury your massive drill in one's chest as you incinerate another with an effortless hand-gesture, simultaneously wielding your immense genetic powers and lethal weaponry. And then a strange silence.

5-STAR REASON TO CARE ABOUT BIOSHOCK 2


BIOSHOCK
PLAYSTATION 3
M
2K GAMES
PlayStation
The Official Magazine
★★★★★
Editors' Choice

Given that the original *BioShock* didn't reach the PS3 until about six months ago, we realize that some of you may not have had a chance to play it yet and therefore won't particularly care about the sequel. Well, start caring! From our November 2008 review: *"BioShock* is a remarkable achievement, a triumph of gameplay and narrative that everyone should choose to play." Not only did we find *BioShock* worthy of our coveted five-star rating, but after our recent visit to 2K Marin, we have complete confidence in the ability of that team to deliver a sequel worthy of the original (despite the fact that series creator Ken Levine is only "casually" involved). Seriously, expect great things from 2K Marin in the future.

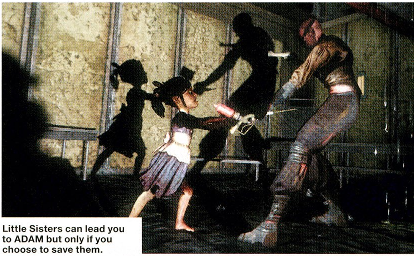


JT "The thing that we've done this time around is take the plasmid system and deepen it. The plasmid system is growing a little bit. Not only are there discrete milestones within each plasmid...so let's say you have Incinerate: the first version is the old *snap* and guy gets horrible incendiary death. The second one is, you sort of get to charge it up and then throw this blast, which hits people in the radius. And then the third is, again, a totally new usage where you really have to invest, but then you can sort of use your hand as flamethrower. All of the plasmids have these milestones. At new milestones, you don't just do a little more damage or a little more duration, it's actually changing you tactically."

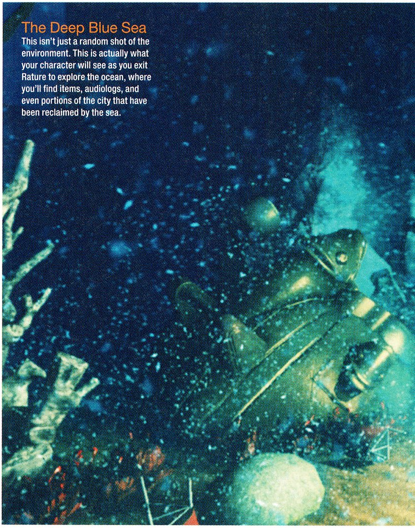
"Is that her? Follow her!" Tenenbaum commands desperately. You obey. Blindly, you chase the silence into a vast, empty ballroom—once radiant and opulent, now consigned to darkness and decay.

JT "You get to probe into Rapture's deepest secrets, places that you never saw in the first game, and every so often, you'll get to see a hint of what has happened, what all that time has done to places that are familiar to you if you were a fan of the first game... And suffice it to say that horror is one of my personal tingles, and I'm attempting to kind of come at you in an oblique fashion. I'm attempting to mess with your mind this time. So while playing the first Big Daddy means that you're a little bit natively more burly at the beginning, I still very much want you to feel threatened and paranoid throughout the game."

Suddenly, the silent specter materializes before you: a slender young woman, bound in an elaborate ensemble of leather



Little Sisters can lead you to ADAM but only if you choose to save them.



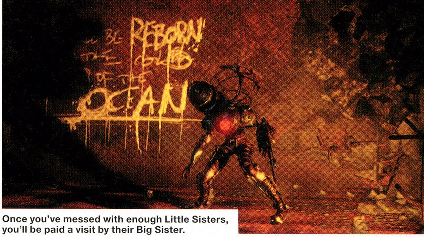
The Deep Blue Sea

This isn't just a random shot of the environment. This is actually what your character will see as you exit Rature to explore the ocean, where you'll find items, audiologs, and even portions of the city that have been reclaimed by the sea.

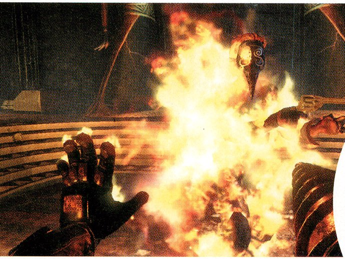
"I'm attempting to mess with your mind this time...I still very much want you to feel threatened and paranoid throughout the game."

and metal. She floats ominously above the dance floor—a vortex of debris collecting around her—before unleashing an abrupt telekinetic blast. The camera careens backwards, your gaze rudely averted towards the ceiling. You struggle to your feet in time to witness your attacker dart across a grand window on the room's far side. The glass begins to crack.

JT "I can't go too deeply into it, but suffice it to say there are new surprises to come that are very much answering things that we felt that both players and us as a development team thought needed to happen, that people kind of lusted for..."



Once you've messed with enough Little Sisters, you'll be paid a visit by their Big Sister.



THE RESULTS **ARE IN!**

Way back in our January 2009 issue, we broke down the very first *BioShock 2* trailer and made a few educated guesses about the game based on what we found. So how accurate were our predictions? Let's find out!

PREDICTION: "Available: Spring 2009!"
RESULT: Wrong! Um, try fall, guys.

PREDICTION: "The girl herself is, in all likelihood, a grown up Little Sister."
RESULT: Correct! Well, assuming the girl on the beach in the trailer is in fact the Big Sister. But close enough, right?

PREDICTION: "The homemade Big Daddy doll suggests not only that the girl… experienced Rapture firsthand but that she remembers it fondly."
RESULT: Unknown! While it is quite possible that the Big Sister experienced Rapture long before she began kidnapping new Little Sisters, we don't know enough about her yet to understand how she feels about anything.

PREDICTION: "Her construction of a faux-Rapture…foreshadows a revitalization or recreation of Rapture."
RESULT: Correct! Though the city will hardly be "revitalized" (if anything, it will be more dilapidated than ever), *BioShock 2* will indeed return to Rapture.

PREDICTION: "The title screen suggests that the game will return to Rapture after several years."
RESULT: Correct! Oh man, we were so right about…

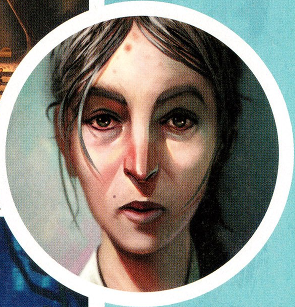
PREDICTION: "On the other hand, the butterfly…hints at the beginning of something entirely new."
RESULT: Wrong! Crap. We were so close, too.

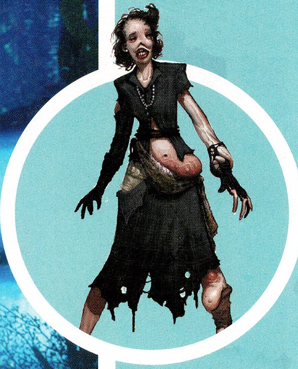
PREDICTION: "Which of the first game's endings will it follow? The most interesting answer is, of course, neither."
RESULT: Wrong! The story will actually use overlapping information from both of the first game's endings.

PREDICTION: "The most likely case seems to be a sequel involving a Little Sister who longs to return to Rapture and somehow attempts to bring the city back to life."
RESULT: Correct! We may not have all the details yet, but our early prediction is eerily close to the current reality. Clearly, we are psychic.

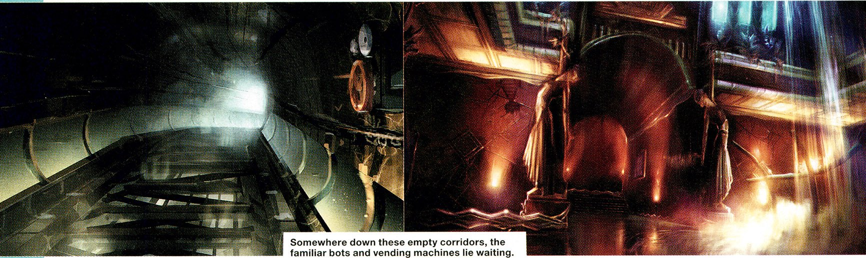
PREDICTION: "…"
RESULT: Wrong! *BioShock 2* WILL contain multiplayer. Maybe we're not so psychic after all?

▼ Tenenbaum





▲ Splicer



Somewhere down these empty corridors, the familiar bots and vending machines lie waiting.

The ocean quickly invades the room, swallowing you entirely. But as the flood settles, you collect yourself and venture slowly out into the sea, accompanied by subtle, majestic music. Again your radio crackles to life. "She does not understand this thing that she does," Tenenbaum states solemnly.

JT "We got a lot of feedback in *BioShock* that the spaces felt kind of jammed together and that people often didn't have a time to ramp back down and literally kind of exhale after an intense fight, and we felt that the ocean had this incredible tranquility and a lot of people just wanted to go out there. So the ocean is a space where you can, like, collect pick-ups—like loose Adam slugs that are alive and roaming out there—you can collect pieces of the story, and other loose equipment, and you can kind of play voyeur and look in on Rapture in spaces that you're about to visit. But it's otherwise a very quiet part of the experience."

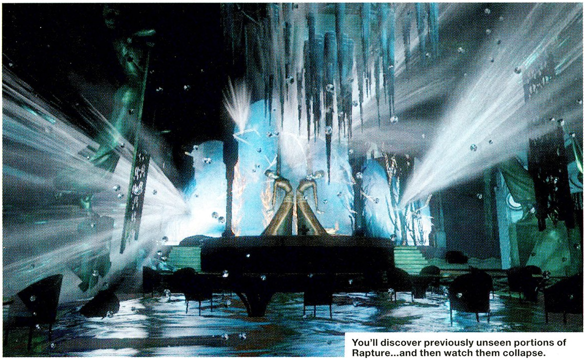
You reach an airlock door and exchange the ocean's relative tranquility for Rapture's grimy turmoil. You are met by the pleading cries of a Little Sister, soon to become another victim of a splicer's addiction. Until you violently alter her circumstances.

JT "We are hanging onto the overlapping elements of both of *BioShock* one's endings. So the intent is that, you know, Tenenbaum built a sort of Underground Railroad for the Little Sisters in the first game. And she had a bunch of them with her, regardless of whether you had been harvesting or saving them throughout the first game. That meant that when *BioShock* ended, Tenenbaum left and lived in Ireland as a kind of war criminal in hiding and a bunch of Little Sisters went with her. And so the idea is that, since then, something has returned to Rapture and started abducting new girls of the right age range from all over the Atlantic Coast, bringing them down to Rapture, and forcing them through the Little Sister conditioning. So the one's [in the demo] are actually new."

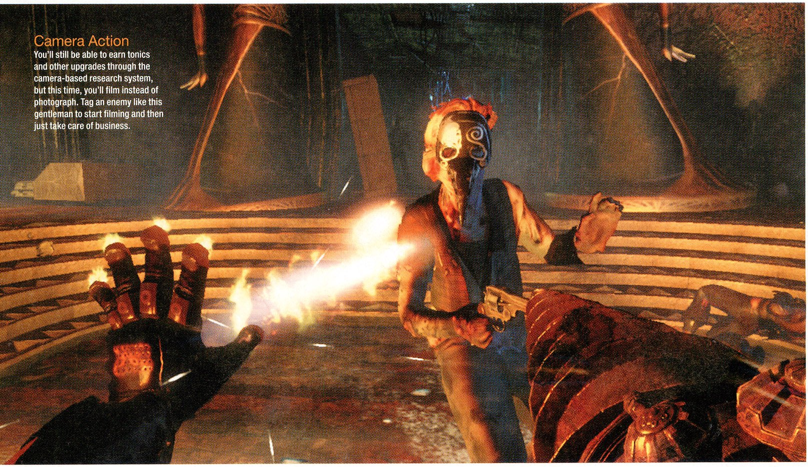
You are presented with a choice: harvest her ADAM or adopt her as a partner? Choosing the latter, she climbs onto your shoulders and directs you to the nearest ADAM-laden corpse. Once you arrive, you gently place her near the body, and the grim extraction process begins. And then you hear them coming.

JT "The primary quest line in *BioShock* 2 is not obstructed by what you would traditionally consider puzzles, but there are some pretty hard action kind of obstacle challenges. And so we feel like the player will essentially iterate on his or her own strategy in a similar cognitive challenge way that puzzles present in other games, but in a way that is more consensual. We want it to be your plan. We want to encourage the player to try experimenting. For instance, where we've gone with the Research Camera is...we knew about all this cool stuff you

"We didn't want to tell you how to play the game, but we wanted to recognize when you were being creative with the tools and reward you."



You'll discover previously unseen portions of Rapture...and then watch them collapse.



Camera Action
You'll still be able to earn tonics and other upgrades through the camera-based research system, but this time, you'll film instead of photograph. Tag an enemy like this gentleman to start filming and then just take care of business.

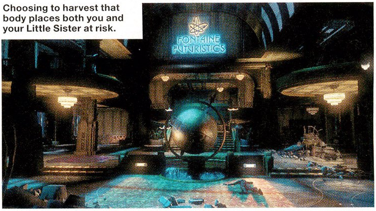
could do when you combined your tools, but in the first it was all relatively unpublished. You had to really dig for that. So we won't be giving you assignments because—once again going back to player choice—we didn't want to tell you how to play the game, but we wanted to recognize when you were being creative with the tools and make sure that you were rewarded for that. Anything you do that is cool, we're going to try to recognize and give you research points for it."

As Splicers pour into the area, you work quickly to establish a perimeter, setting tornado-like traps around your Little Sister. Chaos. With a rivet gun now clinging to your right arm and genetic flames still bursting from your left, you engage the swarm of contorted monsters, less human now than ever before.

JT "There are survivors who never spliced who are just now getting tempted and are heading down the path. So you'll see Splicers that at one far end of the spectrum that are fairly similar to *BioShock* one with maybe a few more kind of Elephant Man-esque mutations, but then you'll see the guys who've survived all this time. And those are the guys that are starting to look more monstrous. And their abilities are changing too. For instance, the ceiling-crawler is becoming this elongated super predator, and he's able to leap to clutch points on the walls now. But also this time around, you actually get to interact with [unspliced people] face to face. You get to work with characters that are unspliced, sane, and close to you. They're fairly foregrounded, and you make choices related to their fate over the course of the game."

"All done, Mr. B," chirps your Little Sister as the violence finally subsides. But her voice gives way to a familiar silence. The Big Sister emerges from the shadows, and before you can react, she streaks towards you in a terrible fury. Then, only darkness. ■

Behold your reflection. Who you are is a mystery, but *what* you are is very clear.



Choosing to harvest that body places both you and your Little Sister at risk.

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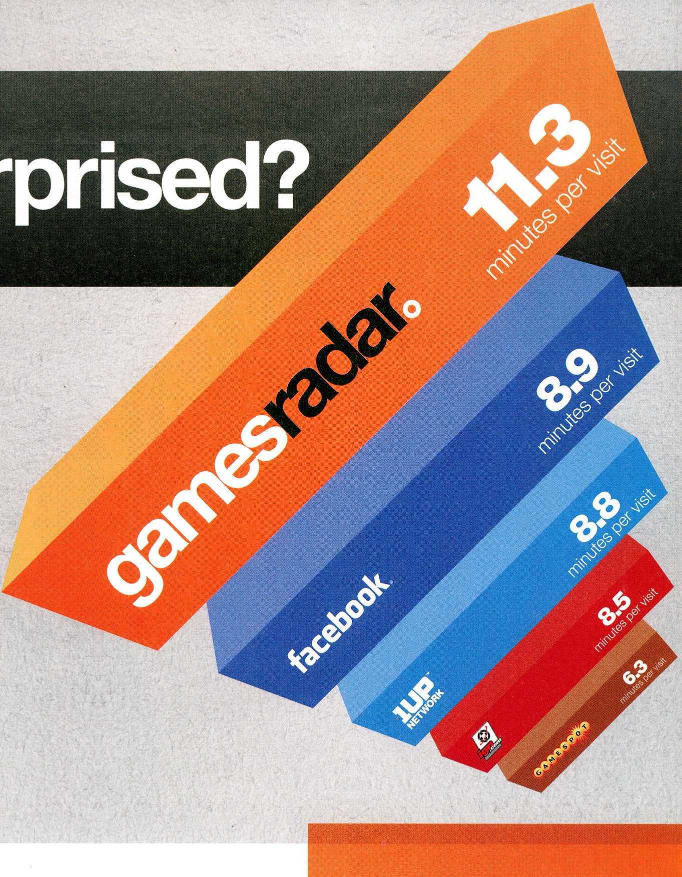

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FEATURE

FINAL FANTASY® XIII

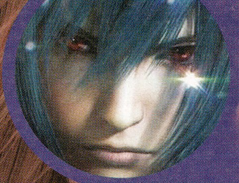
A (corrupt?) theocracy, a "marked" cast of rebels, and a leap forward in turn-based gaming—our hands-on experience

BY TERESA DUN

Thank Shiva and Ifrit and Bahamut, it's about time we learned more about *FF XIII.* This spring in Japan, an extended version of the *Advent Children* film will be released, called *Advent Children Complete.* It'll contain extra footage of the film and trailers of the *Fabula Nova Crystallis* game. But the juiciest extra? Some editions of *ACC* will include a playable demo of *Final Fantasy XIII.*

It's not the finished product—and it generates more questions than its cautiously constructed cutscenes answer—but this hour or so long gameplay demo will offer a tangible glimpse into *FF XIII's* combat system. It'll also showcase the game's detailed and colorful graphics capabilities (all the screenshots in these pages are rendered with the game's Crystal Tools engine—the same one chugging the code in-game) along with revealing a tiny bit more about the story.

But you don't have to wait for later this year—or learn Japanese. To unearth all the detail about the upcoming demo, I traveled 11 hours to the Square Enix offices in Tokyo, Japan to see and play it firsthand (four times). I also quizzed Yoshinori Kitase (producer on *FF XIII*), Isamu Kamikokuryo (art director), and Motomu Toriyama (director) about their perspective on the first playable demo of *FF XIII.* The payoff: These next few pages contain every last tidbit gleaned from that demo. Plus, a few extras that the developers let slip as I plied them with *shochu* (a tradational Japanese spirit).



FABULA NOVA CRYS-WHAAA-LIS?!

Fabula Nova Crystallis Final Fantasy XIII. That's the full name—Latin for "the new tale of the crystal"—and it's a mouthful, but it's important, so remember it. Why? Because that's the umbrella for the *Final Fantasy* titles that will dominate your PS3 and PSP systems for the next couple of years. According to Kitase the series contains three games:

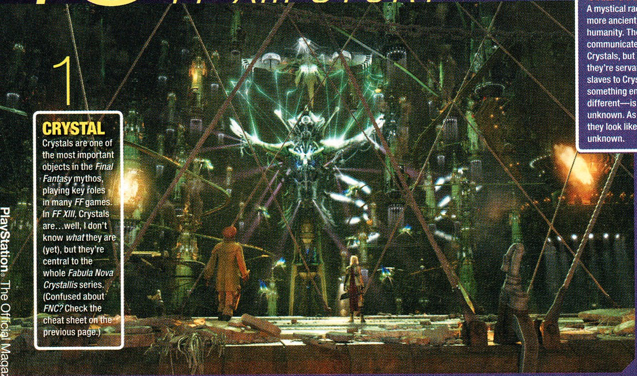
» ***Final Fantasy XIII* (PS3):** "The most traditional, a command-based system with a much more evolved command battle system [than you're used to]."

» ***Final Fantasy Versus XIII* (PS3):** "More action-based, much like a *Kingdom Hearts* title."

» ***Final Fantasy Agito XIII* (PSP):** "The portable title. It's basically a new style of 'multiplay' for a portable console."

They're not at all related in story or gameplay. Instead, they're linked by a common mythos. "The crystal has always been a key item that appears throughout the *FF* series," explains producer Kitase, "and the concept of starting *FNC* was that it's a renewed sense of starting from scratch, of starting this whole myth from the beginning." *FF XIII* will be the first in this series to hit store shelves some time, we suspect, in early 2010.

13 FACETS of the FF XIII STORY



1

CRYSTAL

Crystals are one of the most important objects in the *Final Fantasy* mythos, playing key roles in many *FF* games. In *FF XIII*, Crystals are…well, I don't know *what* they are (yet), but they're central to the whole *Fabula Nova Crystallis* series. (Confused about *FNC?* Check the cheat sheet on the previous page.)

2

THE FAL'CIE

A mystical race, more ancient than humanity. They can communicate with Crystals, but whether they're servants or slaves to Crystals—or something entirely different—is unknown. As for what they look like? Another unknown.

3

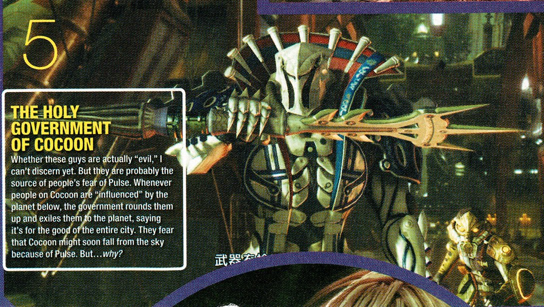
COCOON

A breathtaking city the floats in the sky. Centuries ago, a Crystal told the fal'Cie to construct Cocoon for humanity. Cocoon has its own Crystal—which gives humans new technology to make life more convenient—but things on Cocoon seem to have changed in the hundreds of years since its inception…

4

PULSE

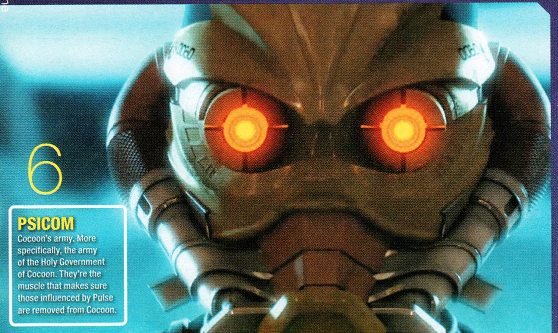
The wildly beautiful planet beneath Cocoon, which *we* know about, having seen the trailers, but the folks on Cocoon do not. They're terrified of Pulse, believing it to be some cursed, desolate wasteland. Sometimes, Pulse "influences" people in Cocoon… though what that means exactly is a mystery. Whether Pulse is inhabited or not is also a mystery.



5

THE HOLY GOVERNMENT OF COCOON

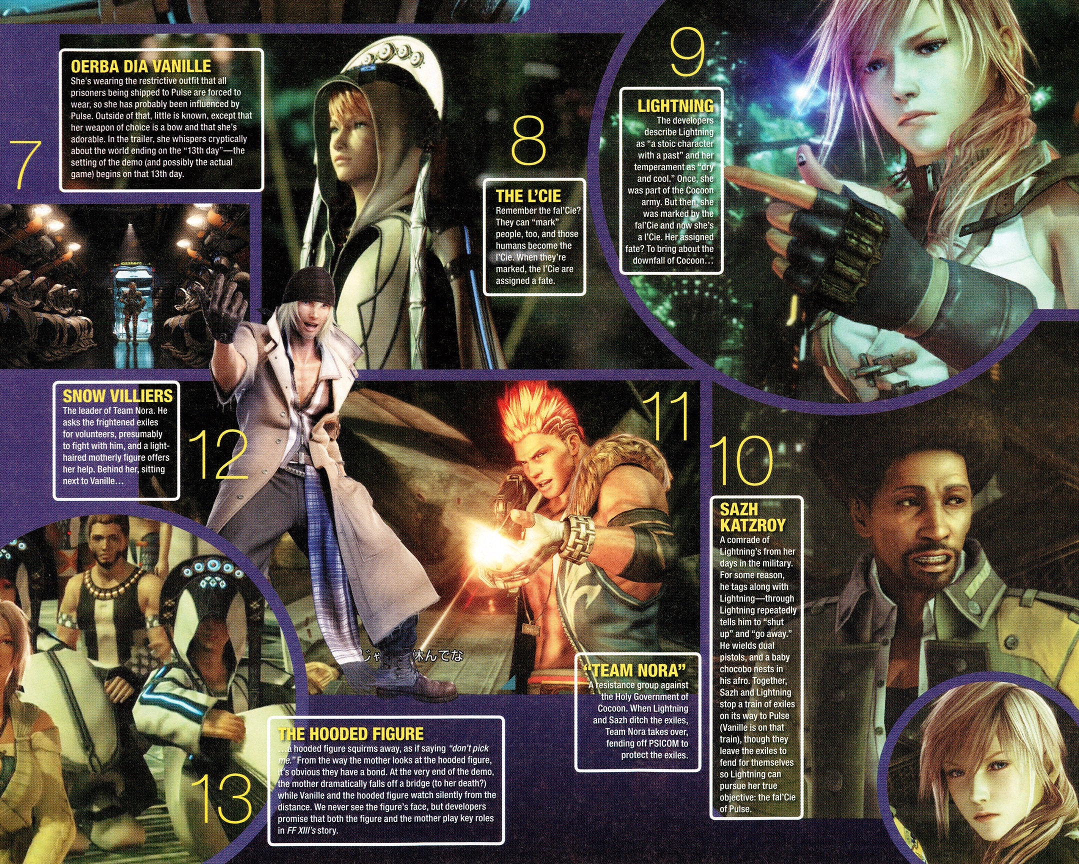
Whether these guys are actually "evil," I can't discern yet. But they are probably the source of people's fear of Pulse. Whenever people on Cocoon are "influenced" by the planet below, the government rounds them up and exiles them to the planet, saying it's for the good of the entire city. They fear that Cocoon might soon fall from the sky because of Pulse. But…*why?*



6

PSICOM

Cocoon's army. More specifically, the army of the Holy Government of Cocoon. They're the muscle that makes sure those influenced by Pulse are removed from Cocoon.



7

OERBA DIA VANILLE

She's wearing the restrictive outfit that all prisoners being shipped to Pulse are forced to wear, so she has probably been influenced by Pulse. Outside of that, little is known, except that her weapon of choice is a bow and that she's adorable. In the trailer, she whispers cryptically about the world ending on the "13th day"—the setting of the demo (and possibly the actual game) begins on that 13th day.

8

THE L'CIE

Remember the fal'Cie? They can "mark" people, too, and those humans become the l'Cie. When they're marked, the l'Cie are assigned a fate.

9

LIGHTNING

The developers describe Lightning as "a stoic character with a past" and her temperament as "dry and cool." Once, she was part of the Cocoon army. But then, she was marked by the fal'Cie and now she's a l'Cie. Her assigned fate? To bring about the downfall of Cocoon…

10

SAZH KATZROY

A comrade of Lightning's from her days in the military. For some reason, he tags along with Lightning—through Lightning repeatedly tells him to "shut up" and "go away." He wields dual pistols, and a baby chocobo nests in his afro. Together, Sazh and Lightning stop a train of exiles on its way to Pulse (Vanille is on that train), though they leave the exiles to fend for themselves so Lightning can pursue her true objective: the fal'Cie of Pulse.

11

"TEAM NORA"

A resistance group against the Holy Government of Cocoon. When Lightning and Sazh ditch the exiles, Team Nora takes over, fending off PSICOM to protect the exiles.

12

SNOW VILLIERS

The leader of Team Nora. He asks the frightened exiles for volunteers, presumably to fight with him, and a light-haired motherly figure offers her help. Behind her, sitting next to Vanille…

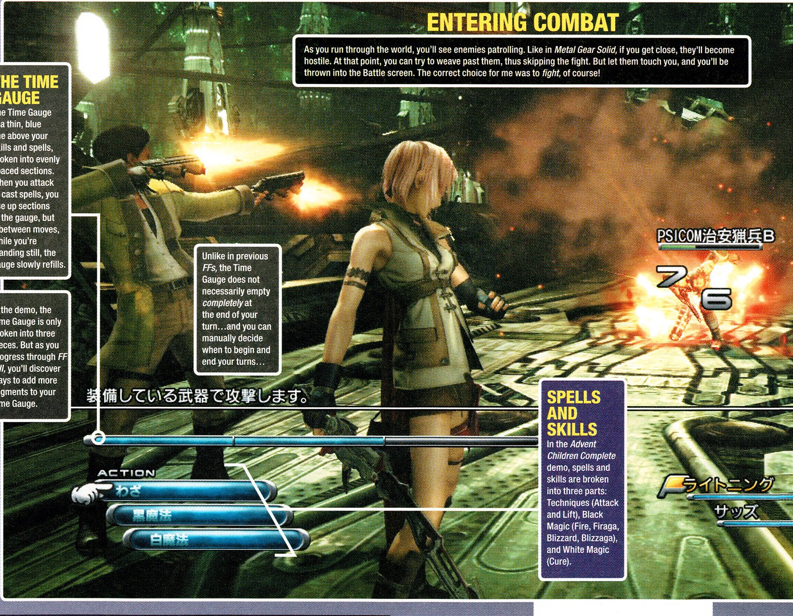
13

THE HOODED FIGURE

…a hooded figure squirms away, as if saying *"don't pick me."* From the way the mother looks at the hooded figure, it's obvious they have a bond. At the very end of the demo, the mother dramatically falls off a bridge (to her death?) while Vanille and the hooded figure watch silently from the distance. We never see the figure's face, but developers promise that both the figure and the mother play key roles in *FF XIII's* story.

FINAL FANTASY XIII COMBAT

The folks at Square Enix call the combat in *FF XIII* an "evolved active-time battle (ATB) system." Their goal: return *FF XIII* to the series' input-based roots. But before you imagine the stodgy, perform-one-action-then-twiddle-your-"chocobos"-til-your-turn-wobbles-'round-again system of yore (which, though alluring in its youth, hasn't aged gracefully), remember the key word: *evolved.* Read on to see what's changed. But keep in mind, what I played in the *Advent Children Complete* demo is a bare-bones sampling of what the combat will entail. Expect *much* more depth in the final product.



ENTERING COMBAT

As you run through the world, you'll see enemies patrolling. Like in *Metal Gear Solid,* if you get close, they'll become hostile. At that point, you can try to weave past them, thus skipping the fight. But let them touch you, and you'll be thrown into the Battle screen. The correct choice for me was to *fight,* of course!

THE TIME GAUGE

The Time Gauge is a thin, blue line above your skills and spells, broken into evenly spaced sections. When you attack or cast spells, you use up sections of the gauge, but inbetween moves, while you're standing still, the gauge slowly refills.

In the demo, the Time Gauge is only broken into three pieces. But as you progress through *FF XIII,* you'll discover ways to add more segments to your Time Gauge.

Unlike in previous *FFs,* the Time Gauge does not necessarily empty *completely* at the end of your turn…and you can manually decide when to begin and end your turns…

SPELLS AND SKILLS

In the *Advent Children Complete* demo, spells and skills are broken into three parts: Techniques (Attack and Lift), Black Magic (Fire, Firaga, Blizzard, Blizzaga), and White Magic (Cure).

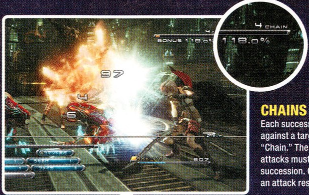
To use your spells and skills:

1: Pick a spell category (Technique, Black Magic, or White Magic).

2: Pick a target (either an enemy or an ally).

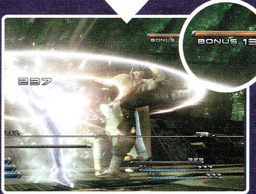
3: Pick the spells or skills you'd like to execute on that target.

In this demo, both the Technique and Black Magic categories let you select from *all* offensive abilities, but the developers haven't specified whether that'll be retained in the final game.



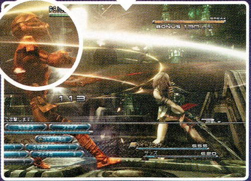
CHAINS

Each successful offensive move against a target increases your "Chain." The obvious catch: attacks must be done in quick succession. Of course, missing an attack resets your chain.



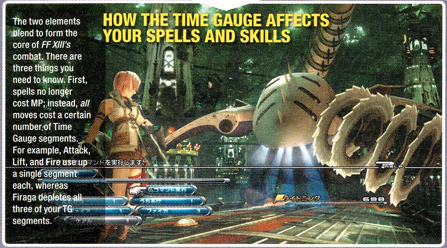
BONUSES

As your Chain increases, the "Bonus" against that target—which is shown as a percentage—also increases. Though this Bonus intuitively feels like it should be a damage modifier, it's not. Instead, when the Bonus reaches a predetermined percentage (which differs depending on the enemy), the enemy goes into "Break" mode.



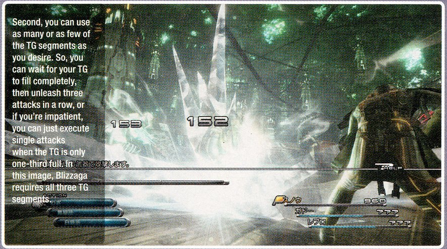
BREAK MODE

Enemies glow red when they're in Break mode. During this time, the enemy is in a weakened stage, taking increased damage and giving you access to special moves. They return to normal when the Break gauge at the top right corner of the screen depletes. According to some developers, the whole point of combat is to get enemies into Break mode as soon as possible…

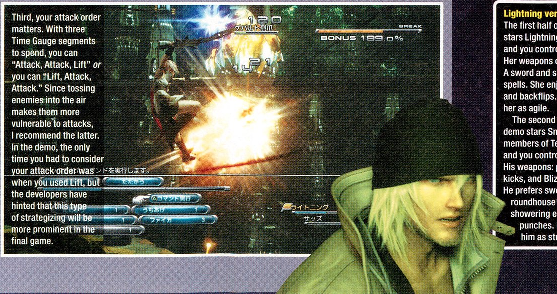


HOW THE TIME GAUGE AFFECTS YOUR SPELLS AND SKILLS

The two elements blend to form the core of *FF XIII's* combat. There are three things you need to know. First, spells no longer cost MP; instead, *all* moves cost a certain number of Time Gauge segments. For example, Attack, Lift, and Fire use up a single segment each, whereas Firaga depletes all three of your TG segments.



Second, you can use as many or as few of the TG segments as you desire. So, you can wait for your TG to fill completely, then unleash three attacks in a row, or if you're impatient, you can just execute single attacks when the TG is only one-third full. In this image, Blizzaga requires all three TG segments.



Third, your attack order matters. With three Time Gauge segments to spend, you can "Attack, Attack, Lift" *or* you can "Lift, Attack, Attack." Since tossing enemies into the air makes them more vulnerable to attacks, I recommend the latter. In the demo, the only time you had to consider your attack order was when you used Lift, but the developers have hinted that this type of strategizing will be more prominent in the final game.

Battle Results

At the end of each encounter, you're brought to the battle results screen where it shows how long it took to complete the battle, the longest chain you were able to pull off, how many Breaks you activated, and an overall Rank (out of five stars). It also shows a "TP Bonus," which was deactivated for the demo. The role of Ranks and TP Bonuses are still a secret, but my guess is that they have to do with Trophies and the still unrevealed level-up system.

Team Work

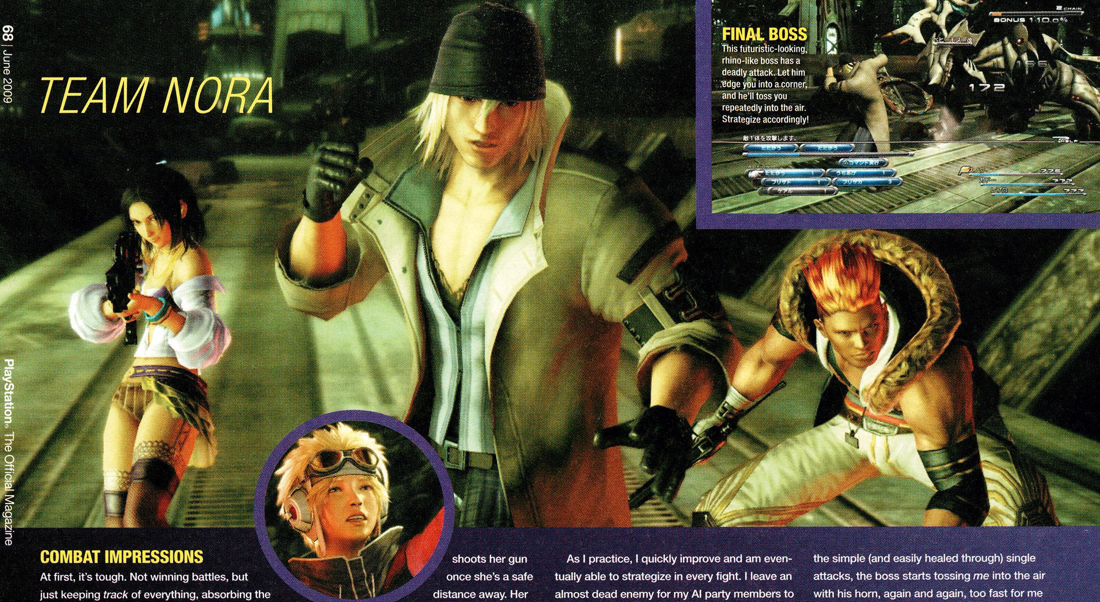
Parties can have up to three members. In the demo, you can only control one of your party members, and you can't choose which. The rest were on auto mode, tossing you heals or attacking to help increase your Chain. Whether you'll be able to swap between party members in the actual game and whether you'll be able to set up their moves in the menu in between battles (like *FF XII's* Gambit system)…it's all still a mystery.

Lightning versus Snow

The first half of the demo stars Lightning and Sazh, and you control Lightning. Her weapons of choice? A sword and some Fire spells. She enjoys jumps and backflips. I'd describe her as agile.

The second half of the demo stars Snow and two members of Team Nora, and you control Snow. His weapons: punches, kicks, and Blizzard spells. He prefers sweeping roundhouse kicks and showering enemies with punches. I'd describe him as sturdy.

TEAM NORA



FINAL BOSS
This futuristic-looking, rhino-like boss has a deadly attack. Let him edge you into a corner, and he'll toss you repeatedly into the air. Strategize accordingly!

COMBAT IMPRESSIONS

At first, it's tough. Not winning battles, but just keeping *track* of everything, absorbing the nuances, and truly trying to comprehend the new battle system, basic as it is in this demo. There's a lot to pay attention to: The Time Gauge, the Chains (and Bonuses and Breaks), enemy health points, *my* health points, and all of it is in a foreign language!

So for my first few battles, I keep it simple. I use physical attacks: I wait for my Time Gauge to fill all the way, tap the attack command three times, and then press Triangle to execute. Whoosh, Lightning sprints forward, slashes once, slashes again, twirling, before she backflips out of the enemy's reach, and then shoots her gun once she's a safe distance away. Her triple attack.

After I master that, I attempt a more complicated move—pushing an enemy into Break mode, then performing a Lift, Fire, and Attack. This requires me to pay attention to the bottom left of the screen (Time Gauge) and the top right (to keep track of my Chain and Bonus level). I also have to watch the enemies' health, to ensure I didn't kill one off too soon (this meant I only attacked once or twice instead of blindly using Lightning's triple attack). At the same time, I have to watch my own health to make sure I heal myself in time.

As I practice, I quickly improve and am eventually able to strategize in every fight. I leave an almost dead enemy for my AI party members to finish off, using the extra TG segment to get a head start on building a Chain for the next enemy. I remember to cast Blizzaga at the beginning of a fight, when there are more opponents on the battlefield. I let my health get below half before I perform a double heal. Even though it's input-based, the combat is frenetic, reflex-dependent, and demands focus.

I also discover that *positioning* is important. When I reach the very last boss, a rhino-like creature, it *owns* me. See, as I executed my fancy Lift-Blizzard-Attack combos, the boss edged me into a corner. Suddenly, instead of the simple (and easily healed through) single attacks, the boss starts tossing *me* into the air with his horn, again and again, too fast for me or my teammates to heal through. For the first time…I lose. On my second attempt, I try a different strategy: the basic triple attack I started the demo with. It's faster, and prevents me from getting cornered, and I manage to destroy the boss before he can pull the same trick again.

Ah, sweet victory! And now you know everything I know about *ACC FF XIII* demo. But don't relax yet. Soon, very soon, within-the-next-few-months soon, we'll have an exclusive scoop on portions of *FF XIII* that the devs aren't talked about yet. Tonberry and Gilgamesh and Cactuar willing, of course. ■

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Even if the voices are not real...
They have pretty good ideas.
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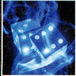
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Mystery GIRL
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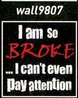
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Games

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game4161

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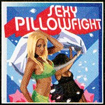

game4159

METAL SLUG 4 MOBILE
game4160

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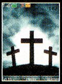
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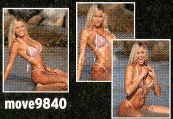
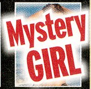
Animated Screensavers


move9840

Life is pain
move9841

move9842

move9843



move9844

Ringtones

Akon - Beautiful	song4626
Akon - Right Now (Na Na Na)	song4627
Akon / Lil Wayne - I'm So Paid	song4628
Eminem / Dr. Dre / 50 Cent - Crack A Bottle	song4629
Jay-Z and T.I. - Swagga Like Us	song4630
Kanye West - Heartless	song4631
Katy Perry - Hot N Cold	song4632
Keri Hilson - Turnin Me On	song4633
Kevin Rudolf / Lil Wayne - Let It Rock	song4634
Lady GaGa - Poker Face	song4635
Lady GaGa / Colby O'Donis - Just Dance	song4636
Lil Wayne - Prom Queen	song4637
Lil Wayne / Bobby Valentino - Mrs. Officer	song4638
Ludacris - One More Drink	song4639
M.I.A. - Paper Planes	song4640
Ne-Yo - Mad	song4641
Rihanna - Rehab	song4642
Soulja Boy Tell Em - Kiss Me Thru The Phone	song4643
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Young Jeezy / Nas - My President	song4645

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Reviews

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RATINGS

★★★★★ **LEGENDARY**
A game so amazing, the entire PTOM staff recommends it. A must buy!

★★★★½ **SUPERB**
Not quite a timeless classic, but one of the finest of its breed.

★★★★ **GREAT!**
A finely crafted, thoroughly enjoyable experience. Worth your time and money.

★★★½ **SOLID**
A strong game. We noticed some flaws, but there's more to like than loathe.

★★★ **ENJOYABLE**
If the topic/license/style is your thing, there's enough to keep you entertained.

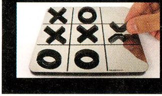
★★½ **MEDIOCRE**
An equal blend of sweet and sour. Discerning gamers can find better.

★★ **SCARRED**
A smattering of entertainment hidden amongst an abundance of flaws.

★½ **FRUSTRATING**
"Argh!" will be the self-created soundtrack of this game. No thank you.

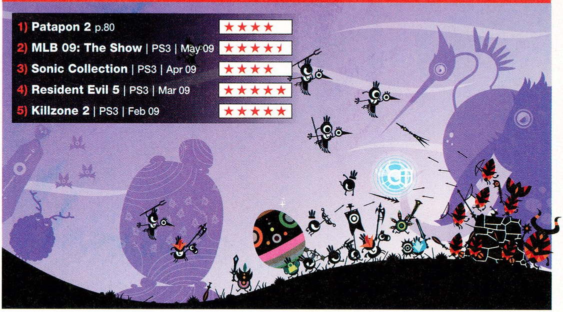
★ **PAINFUL**
We played it so you don't have to. Now you owe us cookies.

½ **BROKEN**
Hey, it comes in a free plastic box! Wee!



Win junk from Rob's desk! We'll select one winner from emails that correctly identify the three photos from our Rating scale and explain how they're related. Send your answers with the subject line "June Ratings" to PTOM_Letters@futureus.com.

Hot 5 List Top Picks from Recent Issues



1) **Patapon 2** p.80 ★★★★
2) **MLB 09: The Show** | PS3 | May 09 ★★★★½
3) **Sonic Collection** | PS3 | Apr 09 ★★★★
4) **Resident Evil 5** | PS3 | Mar 09 ★★★★★
5) **Killzone 2** | PS3 | Feb 09 ★★★★★

Meet the experts delivering your buying advice

Is the PTOM crew tried-and-true? Which *C&C: Red Alert* hottie or hunk could sway our loyalties?

ROB SMITH
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Better red than dead. Oh, wait, that's not right. But when (not if...) Ivana Milicevic's Russian agent Dasha Fedorovich coerces me into spying for the Soviets I'd find it impossible to resist. And I know for a fact she likes English accents, becaue she said so in *Love Actually!* Brunette and blue eyes will get me every time (as it did with my wife...right, wife, must remember that.

NOW PLAYING: *MLB 09: The Show, FIFA 09 Ultimate Team*

TERESA DUN
ASSISTANT EDITOR

Teresa would pick George Takei because he's Mr. Sulu in *Star Trek* and "that makes him awesome!" Plus, his character in *C&C* is an Emperor (Yoshiro), which means he'd make it worth her while to swap sides. (How very gold-diggerish of you, Tizzy.) He'd pay Teresa with an empire's worth of games, while she supplied *his* side with the gaming expertise to turn the tide of battle!

NOW PLAYING: *Patapon 2, Street Fighter IV, Resident Evil 5, CoD: World at War*

KEN BOUSQUET
ART DIRECTOR

Although Ken's pick, Vanessa Branch (aka the Orbit gum girl: "Fabulous!"), plays the role of Soviet Commander Zhana Agonskaya, she's actually British by birth. Ergo, hooking up with Ms. Branch puts Ken one step closer to his beloved English Premier League. After all, soccer *is* all that matters. When it comes right down to it, beautiful women can't hold a candle to the beautiful game.

NOW PLAYING: *FIFA Soccer 09*

CARLOS RUIZ
INTERN

If Gina Carano can go from *American Gladiator* to fighting for the Soviets, then consider Carlos as the Boris to her Soviet sniper Natasha. Not only is she as strong as Absinthe Vodka, she's also an accomplished MMA fighter. Carlos doesn't know who'd be luckier, the guy fighting alongside her or the guy in the submission hold?

NOW PLAYING: *Warhawk, Kane & Lynch, Overlord*

ROGER BURCHILL
MANAGING EDITOR

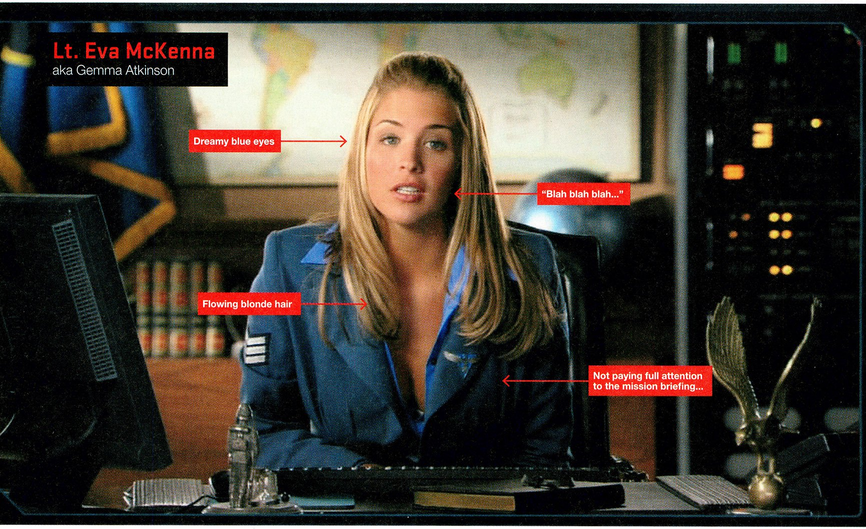
Roger has always had a love/hate thing for Jenny McCarthy. He loves her...um, natural resources, but hates her in speaking roles. (Arrgh! Just quit talking already!) But now, he can throw that babe out with the bath water because of the hereto unknown (to him,) Gemma Atkinson. Where Gemma's Lt. Eva McKenna leads, Roger will follow!

NOW PLAYING: *Stormrise, Resident Evil 5, Street Fighter IV, Red Baron Arcade*

SCOTT BUTTERWORTH
ASSISTANT EDITOR

Scott claims no one could "turn" him because he wouldn't pick a side in the first place. (What a cop-out answer!) Rather than participate in the mindless destruction of war, he'd start an anarchist commune, far away from nuclear fallout and Jenny McCarthy's acting. There, he'd tend his garden and play hacky sack with his hippie friends. Give peace a chance, man!

NOW PLAYING: *Godfather II, SF IV, BioShock* (He just *had* to replay it after seeing the sequel.)

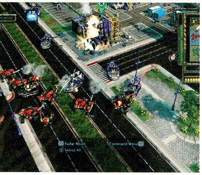


PS3 | R

Command & Conquer: Red Alert 3

Command & Ogle

PS3 PRICE: $59.99 ESRB: Teen PUBLISHER: EA DEVELOPER: EA



Garrison squashy foot soldiers in buildings to give them a chance of survival.

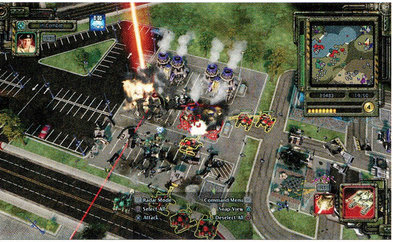
Control was always going to be the biggest hurdle. Despite production values as high-level and compelling as you could hope for in an RTS, if maneuvering troops and manipulating build queues doesn't hold up, those marvelous acting vignettes won't mean much. Well, the rotary interface used for scrolling around to your chosen unit or building is certainly fussy. Part of the problem isn't so much the mechanic itself, which you're eased into through the starting missions, but the sheer volume of options. Each unit has at least one secondary attack, two different types of movement, and four stances. You're asked to make the most of all these while building new troops and structures, managing a co-commander, and calling in special weapons attacks.

It's also difficult, particularly in the later missions, to keep track of all your troops. Shortcuts are available through the Command menu, and units can be grouped, but effectively managing them all at once is virtually impossible when skirmishes flare up all over the map. That means a steep learning curve and occasional feelings of simply being overwhelmed. It's hard to feel like you're truly on top of your strategy, making key command decisions, when you're jumping around trying to see which guy went where.

The color of honeys

One big promise EA made about this delayed PS3 version is that the visuals have been upgraded to make the most of the system's hardware. It's certainly colorful, even garishly so in some instances, but the units are finely detailed, though the environments—particularly the city blocks—occasionally look a little cartoonish. These visuals do fit with *Red Alert's* tongue-in-cheek approach to modern warfare, but *pink* tanks in the two-hour tutorial is taking the joke one step too far for us!

Luckily, *Red Alert's* well-produced FMV cutscenes keep you glued to each mission briefing like no other



In previous *C&C* games losing your construction yard meant certain defeat. Now you can build mobile construction vehicles and relocate.

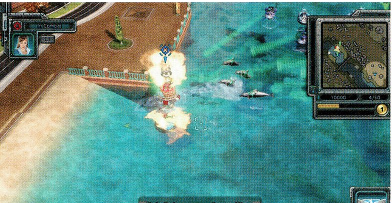
game can manage. Hollywood stars Tim Curry, Jonathan Pryce, and George Takei play the Allied, Soviet, and Empire of the Rising Sun faction leaders. After their intros you're handed over to your faction's busty field support (Gemma Atkinson, Kelly Hu, or Ivana Milicevic) for a more-detailed and aesthetically pleasing mission briefing. The acting in each of these cutscenes is deliciously hammy, and the outtakes on this packed collector's edition extra disc make it unmissable.

While we struggled with the single-player missions, co-op is a saving grace. Every main mission in the campaign can be tackled with a friend on or offline, and with a buddy on your side it makes things so much easier. Instead of managing your co-commander, you can simply bark instructions to your friend, and coordinate your forces more effectively. You can split duties between offensive and defensive, or between ground and naval forces.

It seems that EA bit off just a bit more than the PS3-owning RTS fan is likely able to handle. That does speak to the sheer volume of content, which will keep you strategizing for months. Plus the additional features available in the pack such as the full library of unit types (worth spending time with to get insights into how the land, sea, and air units can work together) add value to the overall package. It really is a joy to see your superiors flashing their winning smiles and ample cleavages at you, and the co-op play is really fun when there are two of you to wrangle the controls into submission. It proves, just about, that a PC-focused RTS can make the leap to PS3, and we just hope for a more simplified control method next time out.

Andy Hartup

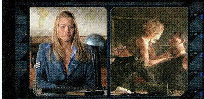
★★★★



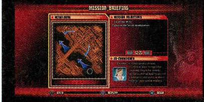
Red Alert 3 is set in an alternate version of the 21st century, and features outlandish units such as armored war-bears, dolphins with torpedo launchers, nuclear-powered Japanese schoolgirls, and huge mechs.

Dirty Dozen: Anatomy of a battle

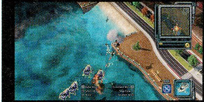
The Allied Heidelberg mission, from start to finish:



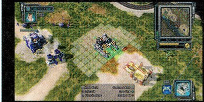
1. Sexy superiors: Gemma Atkinson and Jenny McCarthy give us an update on how the war is going.



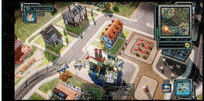
2. Getting tactical: Our main objectives are summed up before battle. Here we're told to escort MCVs (mobile construction vehicles) up a river.



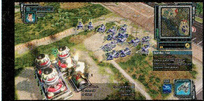
3. Hydro-foiled plans: Using our hydrofoils and combat dolphins (really) we off the Soviet river defenses.



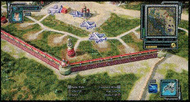
4. Base camp: With the MCVs ashore we can set up base and start preparing a force.



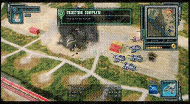
5. Bonus objective: Word reaches us that series stalwart Tanya (Jenny McCarthy) is trapped in a Soviet stronghold. We send bombers.



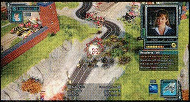
6. Breaking in: We attack the Soviet's outer defenses and destroy a power plant, taking their Tesla coils offline.



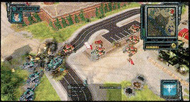
7. Pushing on: With the outer base obliterated we start picking off the inner defenses using our trusty bombers.



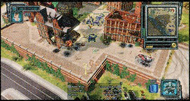
8. Curtains down: Finally, we break in and attack the Soviet Iron Curtain—a weapon that grants them invincibility.



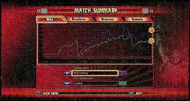
9. Hammer time: The last part of the mission is a push towards the castle, which houses the enemy HQ.



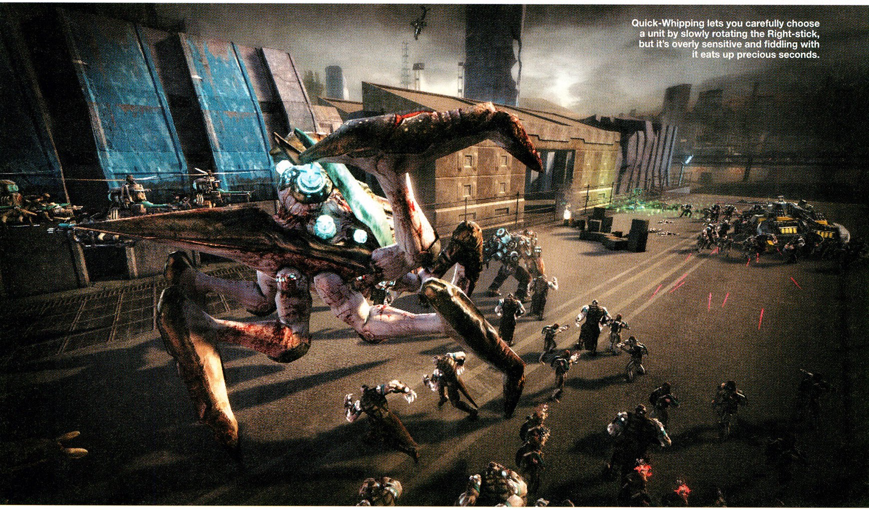
10. Buddy up: Combining forces with our co-commander, we pick our way past the deadly tanks guarding the castle.



11. Final fight: With all its defenses wiped out, the HQ building is a sitting duck for our tanks. They make short work of it.



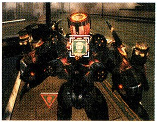
12. Stat's entertainment: The debriefing allows us to check how the battle went, and adjust tactics for the next fight.



Quick-Whipping lets you carefully choose a unit by slowly rotating the Right-stick, but it's overly sensitive and fiddling with it eats up precious seconds.

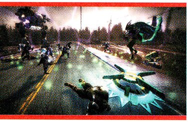
PS3 | **R**

Stormrise



Whip it. Whip it good

PS3 PRICE: $59.99 ESRB: Mature PUBLISHER: SEGA DEVELOPER: The Creative Assembly



The old adage of the best ideas being among the simplest generally proves true in videogames. The more complicated the idea, the more chance of a crucial link in the chain breaking and undermining the whole thing. *Stormrise* has not one, not three, but *two* new ideas, and they are great—they're simple, blindingly obvious, and improve the game by their presence. And yet the basics seem to have come a little bit unstuck in a few places.

A new dimension

The first great idea in *Stormrise* is that you conduct your skirmishes in differing planes, which means that levels are interesting to look at and three-dimensional. There's left, right, up, down, here, there, over yonder, and far away—and that opens up strategic options aplenty. Games like *Command & Conquer* and other "three-dimensional" real-time strategy titles are like shuffling toy soldiers around a board on your dining room table in comparison—they're a bit flat.

In *Stormrise,* the ace up the sleeve is the use of undulation in its environments, be it the warehouses in an abandoned railway yard providing another point of attack to consider, or the wreckage of a cityscape providing raised vantage points surrounding a giant rift that cleaves a city in half. In fact, the level design is one of the major highpoints. Each one is varied, providing a starkly different challenge from the one preceding it, and enough space and scope to lay the most elaborate traps.

Of course, that works both ways. There is a certain amount of trial-and-error, like when you discover an assault force hiding in a bunker while you concentrated on advancing towards enemies on top of a rise in the distance. Line of sight is the key phrase here; you only have the point of view of whichever squad you're commanding so you *will* miss a tactically placed group of enemies—and that's good. You're always on your toes, always second-guessing and

Every single-player map is included for online battles, and some of them are huge. Up to eight of you can line up as either Sai or Echelon forces, each controlling a smaller squad and being directed by an overall commander.

trying to think a few phases ahead. When you crack it and succeed with an intricate battle plan that has over a dozen of your units placed in key positions all over the map, it really is excellent fun.

Whipper snapper

Stormrise's second great idea is Whip Select, which gives you a full 360-degree sweep of the battlefield with the Right-analog stick acting almost like a radar, highlighting units as you pass over them. It takes a bit of time to detach yourself from long-held practices of how to navigate through an RTS game; I often found myself casually nudging the Right-stick as if to move the camera, but selected a different unit instead (pointing and clicking the Left-stick moves your units). The problems start when you want to quickly flick between units (while multitasking) in the more advanced stages of a skirmish. If you've got a unit between two others you need to flick twice to reach it, which is easier said than executed while in particularly congested parts of a map.

But in general the control system—so important to the success of a strategy game—works well. Hotkeys can be assigned to certain squads with the D-pad, which ameliorates the selection problem, and units can be grouped together with a quick press of L1, which simplifies force deployment. You can also issue commands to units by moving the cursor over them and hitting Square, which allows you to direct units to exact locations—it's especially well-suited for sniper placement. It does seem complicated, and it's initially disorienting, but it's just a case of getting used to it.

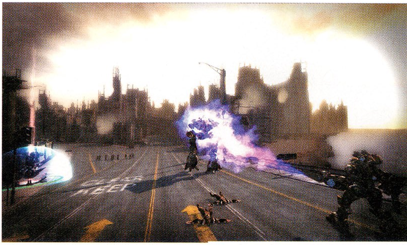
Storm warning

What you shouldn't have to get used to are the basic glitches in gameplay that see some units stuck between walls or wandering off on their own. The mechs in particular (the ones that house the all-important commanders) are particularly prone to confusion and getting blown to bits—Game Over-ing you in the process. The map, too, is a bit of a mess, and can't be relied upon when you're planning an attack, as getting the view angle you want is more difficult than it should be.

These issues are relatively minor, but strategy games are all about the tiny details that add up to a bigger, more coherent picture. *Stormrise's* innovation is heartily applauded, but basic gameplay glitches and flaws weaken the experience. But if you have some patience, *Stormrise* can be a hugely addictive and enjoyable experience.

Simon Bramble

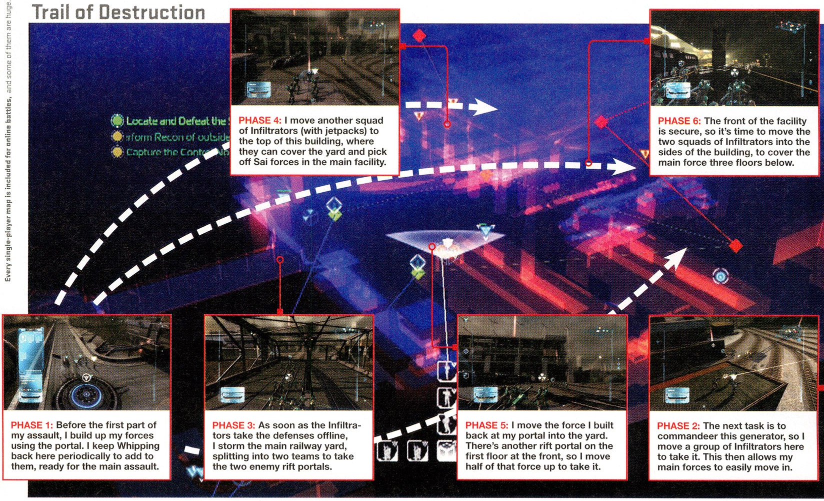
★★★½



If a command mech is destroyed it results in an instantaneous defeat.

Air units take on added strategic importance on a true 3D battlefield.

Trail of Destruction



PHASE 1: Before the first part of my assault, I build up my forces using the portal. I keep Whipping back here periodically to add to them, ready for the main assault.

PHASE 2: The next task is to commandeer this generator, so I move a group of Infiltrators here to take it. This then allows my main forces to easily move in.

PHASE 3: As soon as the Infiltrators take the defenses offline, I storm the main railway yard, splitting into two teams to take the two enemy rift portals.

PHASE 4: I move another squad of Infiltrators (with jetpacks) to the top of this building, where they can cover the yard and pick off Sai forces in the main facility.

PHASE 5: I move the force I built back at my portal into the yard. There's another rift portal on the first floor at the front, so I move half of that force up to take it.

PHASE 6: The front of the facility is secure, so it's time to move the two squads of Infiltrators into the sides of the building, to cover the main force three floors below.

$19,848
Sebastian Herrera

The game packs a violent punch but doesn't offer enough compelling gameplay to elevate it above other contenders in the genre.

The Godfather II

An offer you can probably refuse

PS3 PRICE: $59.99 ESRB: Mature PUBLISHER: EA DEVELOPER: EA Redwood Shores

One thing is certain: EA is trying hard to bring the world of gangsters, crime rings, and criminality (in all its violent forms) to *The Godfather II.* Though it does feature the same free-roaming cities and third-person gunplay as a *Grand Theft Auto* title, there's a somewhat convoluted strategy game buried beneath the *GTA* pretensions that constantly forces your hand.

The aim is to feel like a Don. *The Godfather II* is not about being a thug-for-hire who wants to sort out his reckless cousin. You're here to build a criminal empire, emerging from the streets for building-by-building, business-by-business takeovers of cities.

Like the first *Godfather* game, you don't play a character from the films but a new guy, Dominic, a Capo for Aldo, the hero of the first game who dies in the prologue and leaves his Family in your hands to rebuild. But despite the fact that it shares its name with the movie, the film's plot is barely recognizable. Key scenes play out at certain moments, but it doesn't fit together with the new story of your rise to Don quite as well as it did in the original *Godfather* game.

The new story does at least develop the themes of the film, praying on familiar period paranoia to offer missions that saw my Don-in-waiting smashing up a union and attempting to assassinate Castro for the CIA. It's a good play on the period, especially as the music includes James Brown and what appears to be the moody beige backing-track to every *Colombo* episode ever made.

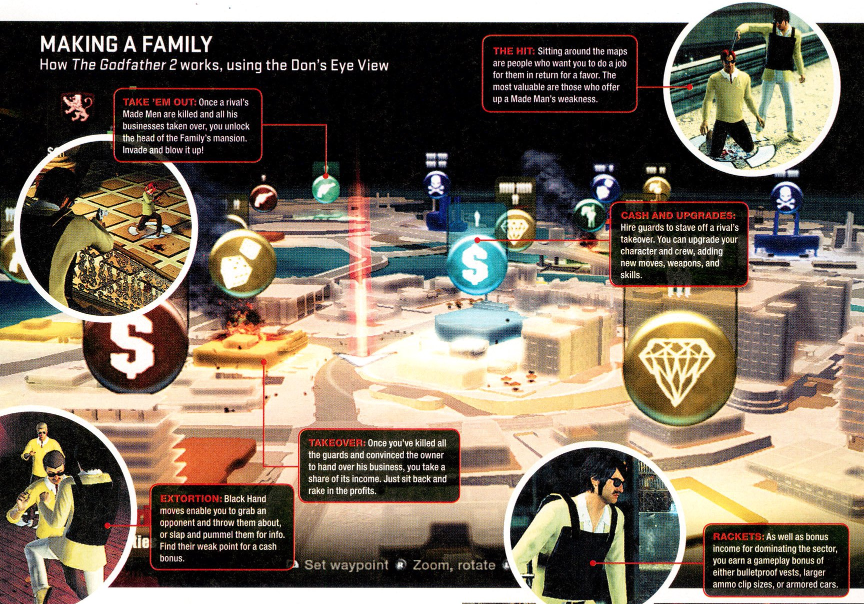
Though you can play the game in the usual on-the-streets *GTA* view, a 3D map interface EA is handily calling the Don's Eye View lets you fully control the strategic portion of the game, like upgrading your men and sending them to defend your businesses (check out the annotated screenshot on the next page for a more detailed overview).

It's these deeper options that help *The Godfather II* play differently from the likes of *GTA* and *Saints Row 2.* Success here isn't just about playing out the scripted story missions, but tinkering with your Family, building crime syndicates, and forging or dismantling alliances with other Families.

Though there's a lot to experiment with, the game's structure does wear thin. You will essentially tour a city map, highlight rival gangs' businesses, roll up with your crew, and take them over without too much trouble. The Cuban map plays more like *Mercenaries* than the tactical map-conquering of the rest of the game,

MAKING A FAMILY

How *The Godfather 2* works, using the Don's Eye View



TAKE 'EM OUT: Once a rival's Made Men are killed and all his businesses taken over, you unlock the head of the Family's mansion. Invade and blow it up!

THE HIT: Sitting around the maps are people who want you to do a job for them in return for a favor. The most valuable are those who offer up a Made Man's weakness.

CASH AND UPGRADES: Hire guards to stave off a rival's takeover. You can upgrade your character and crew, adding new moves, weapons, and skills.

TAKEOVER: Once you've killed all the guards and convinced the owner to hand over his business, you take a share of its income. Just sit back and rake in the profits.

EXTORTION: Black Hand moves enable you to grab an opponent and throw them about, or slap and pummel them for info. Find their weak point for a cash bonus.

RACKETS: As well as bonus income for dominating the sector, you earn a gameplay bonus of either bulletproof vests, larger ammo clip sizes, or armored cars.

but the Florida and New York maps can be dominated in a day or so.

The basic formula is sound and more Families appear on the map as you progress, making you reflect on who and when you attack. But you constantly repeat the same acts: takeover a business, slap a lady for a Made Man's address and weakness, kill him before heading to the Family's mansion for the final payoff.

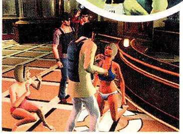
The Godfather II's big problem, though, is that there are few surprises outside of this template. There's no real reason to explore the cities; the maps are quite small and there's a lack of playfulness. While other free-roamers, such as *Saints Row 2* (and to an extent *GTA IV)* layer on bonus missions, extra story strands, and hidden mini-games, *The Godfather II* is a straight-down-the-line formulaic empire builder. You can fiddle with stats and tactics within its rules, but you never step outside of them to have fun on a broader scale—which is a shame.

Even the online multiplayer fails to add some much needed variety, despite the fact that you'll play as one of your henchmen rather than main character Dominic. The game modes are all essentially the same, and although certain elements of the single-player strategy game have been awkwardly mixed in, the main action is still just uninspired run-and-gun gameplay.

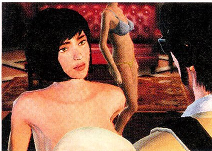
While the core gameplay works, *The Godfather II* is a very straightforward game. The third-person shootouts are fine but they lack thrills, and the empire-building strategy portion works but never offers any deeper freedom to manage your crime rings. Visually, it can't compete with *GTA IV,* and it lacks the imagination of *Saints Row 2.* The bottom line is that its disparate parts don't combine to make a better whole.

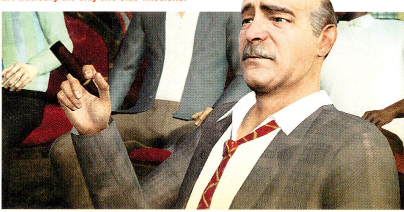
Ian Dean

★★★½



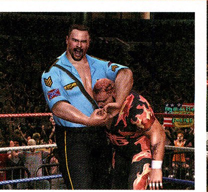
Punching civilians and wrecking shops are basically the only two side-missions.





The story contains a few dialogue trees, but your decisions typically don't affect anything. Beyond that, the narrative is decent but not remarkable.

Warrior was as powerful as he was insane.



Colorful characters like Bossman and Bam Bam will help kids gain some historical perspective.

PS3 | R

WWE Legends of Wrestlemania

A past better than you remember, but far from complete

PS3 PRICE: $59.99 ESRB: Teen PUBLISHER: THQ DEVELOPER: Yuke's

For today's wrestling fan, pay-per-view events happen at least once a month and the superstars are human, not cartoon superheroes. But once upon a time there was only one event that mattered, where the dream matches occurred, and history was written. That place was Wrestlemania. Just in time for the 25th annual wrasslin' spectacular comes *WWE Legends of Wrestlemania,* where you can explore much of its history, one mat classic at a time.

Legends is a heaping dose of nostalgia for longtime fans who remember when the WWE was the WWF. It features more than 40 classic wrestlers plus the evil managers of the day, and goes from the first Mania all the way to XV. And despite being produced by *Smackdown*'s dev Yuke's, it's meant for a more casual audience.

The controls take some getting used to for *Smackdown* veterans, as the Right-stick based grappling and other intricacies are gone. The whole battle system has been streamlined, with punches and grapples requiring one button. Also the move sets on all the characters are smaller, with simpler grapples, which is fitting for the era. Back in the early '90s you were much more likely to see a body slam and atomic drop than a top rope enzuigiri or shining wizard.

You might consider it dumbed down, only this "easier" system was giving me some trouble at first, and its tips and button cues for the novice are a shadow of what *Smackdown* offers. While the game explains a bit of the setup to you, many details are left vague, and once you do comprehend it, the gameplay becomes repetitive. The simplistic set of commands exhibits little in the way of depth, except for on the rarest of occasions.

Of particular note are the finishers and other special attacks. The momentum you need to pull off those powerful beatdowns fills up oddly, with taunts *decreasing* the gauge. Then, once you can attempt a finisher, *Smackdown's* simple two-button combo is replaced with a quick-time-event like something out of *God of War.* QTEs aren't necessarily bad, but when every match has at least a few, it's grating.

Andre was famous for his amazing back rubs.

Make history...again

A welcome addition is the new Legends mode that replaces a traditional story or season mode. In it, you play through classic (and not so classic) matches from Manias one through XV in three categories: Relive, Rewrite, and Redefine. Each takes a historic match and has you accurately recreate it, pull off a different outcome, or completely change the situation. Not a bad idea, but it's a little challenging in practice.

Most of the unlockables are related to these entertaining modes, however *winning* a match in the modes (not just *finishing* it, there's a difference) involves completing several objectives. Some are easy, like performing a taunt or a strong grapple. But in some fights, especially Relive matches, the objectives are tough, like getting your opponent to make you bleed or pulling off a specific series of moves in the first moments of the match. You don't need to complete all the objectives, only most of them, but it can be frustrating.

Hulkamania still running wild, brother!

Where *Legends* really shines is in its presentation. Wrestlemania is an extravaganza known for pulling out all the stops, and *Legends* is filled with much of that old school pomp and ceremony. Each match in the above three modes is preceded by a custom video detailing the feud's history. The short montages are amazingly edited, not just in how they frame the classic matches, but how they replay moments that you'll have to reenact.

Plus each wrestler has a gloriously idealized look, and by that I mean they look like Saturday morning cartoons. Everyone has huge muscles and even Rick Rude and Ultimate Warrior are bigger than life. Hulk Hogan and Andre the Giant may never have actually been that big, but to a kid in his living room in 1987, that's how they seemed, making this recreation true to the memory more than the reality. Also every stadium from each Mania is lovingly recreated, down to the flag draped VII or the little carts that took wrestlers to the ring in III.

However, this isn't a complete history. Many wrestlers and marquee matches aren't included. While I didn't expect everybody, *Legends* has a Macho Man-sized hole at its core, as Randy Savage and WWE have plenty of bad blood and multiple burned bridges between them.

For fans, *Legends* is a diverting interactive museum and an interesting expansion of the legends included in more recent *Smackdowns*. And unlike that series, this is the first entry in what we assume to be an annual iteration, so it's presumably only uphill from here.

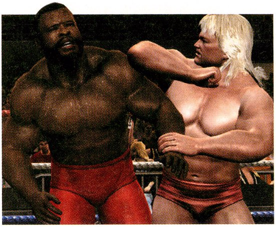
Henry Gilbert

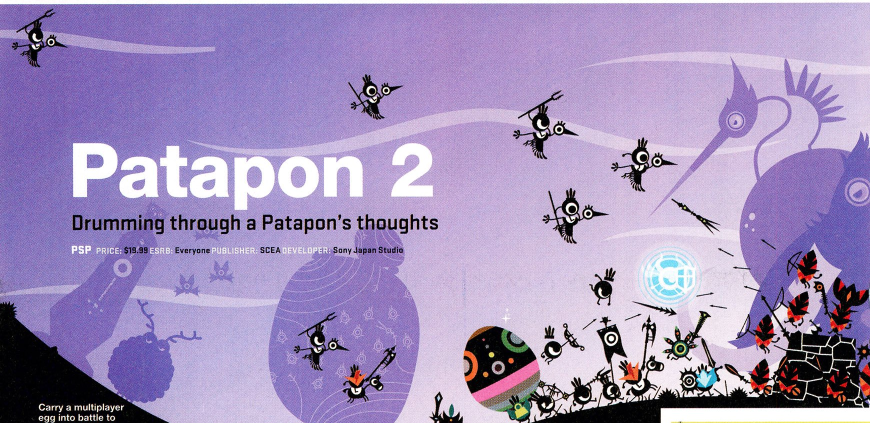
★★★½

The Line-up

- Andre The Giant
- Animal
- Arn Anderson
- Bam Bam Bigelow
- Big Bossman
- Big John Studd
- Bobby "The Brain" Heenan
- Bret Hitman Hart
- British Bulldog
- Brutus Beefcake
- Dusty Rhodes
- Greg Valentine
- Hacksaw Jim Duggan
- Hawk
- Honky Tonk Man
- Hulk Hogan
- Hunter Hearst Helmsley
- Iron Sheik
- Jake The Snake
- Jim "The Anvil" Neidhart
- Jimmy Hart
- Jimmy Snuka
- Junkyard Dog
- Kamala
- King Kong Bundy
- Koko B. Ware
- Michael Hayes
- Mr. Fuji
- Mr. Perfect
- Nikolai Volkoff
- Paul Bearer
- Ravishing Rick Rude
- The Rock
- Ric Flair
- Rowdy Roddy Piper
- Sgt. Slaughter
- Shawn Michaels
- Stone Cold Steve Austin
- Ted DiBiase
- The Ultimate Warrior
- Undertaker
- Yokozuna

Aside from Road Warriors and Hart Foundation, many of the classic tag teams are missing from the game.


When Greg Valentine faces off against Junkyard Dog, it can only be described as a meeting of the minds.



Patapon 2

Drumming through a Patapon's thoughts

PSP PRICE: **$19.99** ESRB: **Everyone** PUBLISHER: **SCEA** DEVELOPER: **Sony Japan Studio**

Carry a multiplayer egg into battle to play with up to three friends. Whoever contributes the most earns the best rewards at the end.

The Patapons care about three things: food, songs, and war. How do I know? Because I'm their god, TRSA. I beat the "drums" (the four face buttons) and lead them through side-scrolling, 2D battles. I tap out a specific four-beat rhythm; they sing it back to me, executing the command (attack, retreat, defend, jump, etc.) hidden within the notes. Via this rhythmical cycle of command-and-obey, I lead the Patapons to victory.

Hunting means tasty meals

"TRSA took us hunting today. TRSA called the rain, so the prey couldn't smell us. It was a miracle! I was Fever-ish! I hope tomorrow we fight the Zigotons, or Karmens, or whoever our enemies are now."

Fact one: the story is irrelevant. Their fickle rivalries are only important because they unlock new missions. That's what counts. The missions are delightfully designed, with catchy soundtracks, and each feels polished whether the Patapons are storming a fortress, battling an ancient demon, or hunting. Stages are also rife with secrets.

Fact two: Fever mode is achieved by tapping command rhythms perfectly on beat, which is incredibly useful as it increases the Patapons' attack power. The Patapons also sing so enthusiastically when in Fever mode that it makes this god smile.

Fact three: you need to find and use Miracles, like rain, tailwind, attack boost, etc. These are hidden in stages. You can bring a single Miracle with you into battle and activate it by playing a small rhythm mini-game.

TRSA's Hero TIZY is the best!

"TRSA's favorite Patapon is TIZY. TIZY is my idol. One day, I hope to be as powerful as TIZY. I hope TRSA takes me to Mater soon so I can evolve!"

The Hero Patapon is new to the series. He can swap between any of the classes you've unlocked (like spearman, archer, or front-line fighter), and his special ability will change accordingly (for example, as a fighter, he covers everyone in a protective shield). Your Hero is also the character you take into multiplayer battles. (These skirmishes are the same as fighting a boss, except you do it with three nearby real-life friends and earn better rewards.)

Using Mater, a special tree, you can evolve regular Patapons to ever more powerful versions of their class. Unfortunately, the Evolution map is obscure. It's hard to know where each evolution leads, and the only way to improve your characters is through expensive trial and error.

Pay attention, TRSA!

"Sometimes, TRSA forgets to play the drum, and we stand there, impatient. Don't sleep on the job, TRSA!"

Besides the indecipherable Evolution Map, *Patapon 2* is well made, with plenty of reasons to replay levels: to bask in the music, to unlock more secrets, to farm for more resources, for example. That just makes this one oversight all the more frustrating: There is no pause button! I've ostracized myself to many people because I chose to finish a *Patapon 2* level instead of acknowledging their presence. Now, my only friends are the Patapons.

Teresa Dun

★★★★

Beware of flames! If Patapons get too close, they'll catch fire!

You need to repeatedly explore a stage to discover all its secrets.

Please, take the drum!

Import items from *Patapon* into *Patapon 2* using an old save file.

Pick up gear that enemies drop to outfit your own troops.

Phantasy Star Portable

Another portable, multiplayer RPG to occupy your lonely days

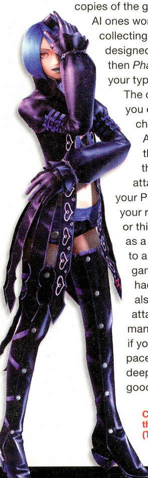
PSP PRICE: $39.99 ESRB: Teen PUBLISHER: SEGA DEVELOPER: Alfa System

Wallop a radioactively mutated cow in the behind with a giant lollipop. Or with a huge chunk of meat. Or with a lightsaber-wannabe sword. That, in a nutshell, is the draw of this action-RPG: you never know what crazy weapon or piece of armor will drop as you weave through dungeons with up to three friends (real ones with their own copies of the game, preferably, but the AI ones work, too). If discovering, collecting, and equipping oddly designed loot is your passion, then *Phantasy Star Portable* is your type of game.

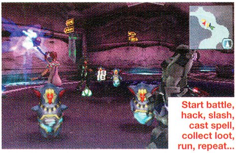
The combat is simple: after you equip your weapons of choice and attach Photon Arts (magic spells) to them, you basically have three moves. You can attack normally, attack with your Photon Art, or attack with your ranged weapon (in first- or third-person). If you play as a caster, you have access to a few more spells, but the gameplay is still frenzied hack-'n'-slash. You can also parry and counterattack, but those defensive maneuvers aren't required if you level up at a normal pace. The battles aren't deep, but the steady drop of goodies (and the pleasant rate of character and Photon Art level-ups) helps you ignore that fact.

But you have to really love RPGs to overlook the game's other flaws. The story is divisive; you either buy into it or not, and you can decide which camp you're in from this brief description: A newly born, naïve android girl is trying to understand the world and your response to various morally ambiguous situations shapes her personality. Alongside that, the environments are bland, the level layouts are reused, and enemy variety is sparse. But the overall ratio of effort versus reward is satisfying, and it's hard to resist patting a cow butt with a lollipop at least once in your life. Teresa Dun

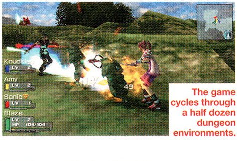
★★★



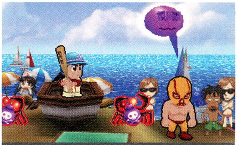
Character outfits are one of the game world's few draws. (That's not a good thing.)



Start battle, hack, slash, cast spell, collect loot, run, repeat...



The game cycles through a half dozen dungeon environments.



Knock the emotion bubble away from that discouraged wrestler and he'll write you a thank you letter! (Reading those letters, and the similar Personnel Files of the bad guys, is the *best* part of the game!)

Hammerin' Hero

Ridiculous concept, but it's one of a kind

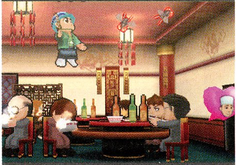
PSP PRICE: $29.99 ESRB: Everyone 10+
PUBLISHER: Atlus DEVELOPER: Irem

What do the following scenes have in common? A boy strolls through a construction zone, bashing evil construction workers on the head with an oversized hammer. A boy races through a TV studio, bonking hostile cameramen with an oversized hammer. A boy hops onto a carousel, bashing flying buckets of paint with an oversized hammer.

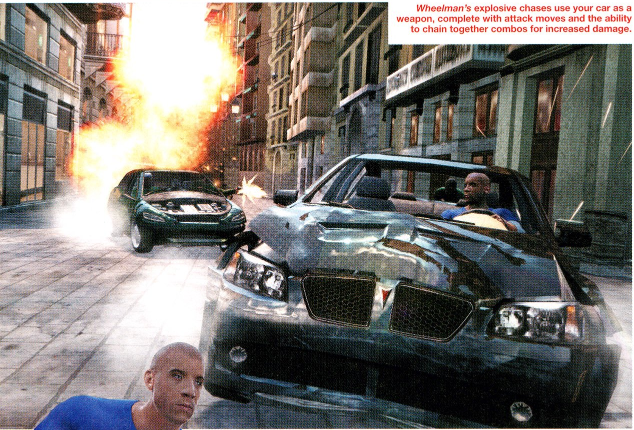
That's right. They all feature the boy Gen-san, aka the "Hammerin' Hero," who uses his hammer to bash injustice dead in this sidescrolling beat-'em-up. Later, Gen unlocks other professions (including diver, DJ, and sushi chef), each with their own weapon specialties (anchor, vinyl record, and sushi, respectively) as he jogs through 12 unusual stages (like a sushi bar and a baseball diamond). It's as ridiculous as it sounds.

The game is short and the controls are unresponsive (just let me *jump* already!), but the quirky humor redeems those shortcomings—almost. Enough to make the game worth *playing,* but not necessarily worth buying...at full price, at least. Teresa Dun

★★½



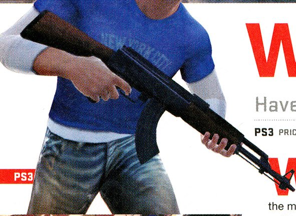
Don't touch the flies! Anything glowing with a red outline is bad...



Wheelman's explosive chases use your car as a weapon, complete with attack moves and the ability to chain together combos for increased damage.

Learn to Focus

Fill Milo's Focus gauge by driving fast and smashing objects, and you can do cool stuff. Hitting X gets you a nitro boost, regardless of what you're driving. But that pales in comparison to Aimed Shot, a bullet-time move that can blow up enemy cars with a single shot, and Cyclone, which is the same but executed while driving backward. Like Milo's other abilities, completing side missions can boost Focus.



PS3

Wheelman

Have gun, will travel (extremely fast)

PS3 PRICE: $59.99 ESRB: Teen PUBLISHER: Ubisoft DEVELOPER: Tigon, Midway Studios Newcastle

With *GTA IV* defining melancholy realism and *Saints Row 2* cornering the market on crazy variety, it's getting harder for free-roaming sandbox games to stand out. Amazingly, *Wheelman*—starring Vin Diesel as getaway driver/undercover CIA goon Milo Burik—does a bang-up job, combining elements from *DRIV3R, Burnout,* and PSP classic *Pursuit Force* to create an impossibly fast, stylized take on car crime. It doesn't always play as slick as it looks, but when it does, it's quite amazing.

Set in a pretty (if oddly sterile) mock-up of Barcelona, *Wheelman's* biggest innovation is weaponizing your car. Flicking the Right-analog stick left, right, or forward bashes you into other cars, and continuous smashing leads to spectacular slow-motion explosions. (You can also shoot at them, although that usually just means holding down L1 to auto-aim and firing until your target explodes/dies.) The controls are tight, the chases are intense, and best of all you can "airjack" new rides by pulling up from behind, leaping onto the roof, and booting the driver into traffic.

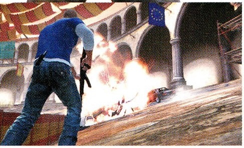
Sadly, the action's marred by awful rubber-band AI. No matter what vehicle you're driving or how fast you're going, your pursuers and targets will almost always adjust their speed relative to yours. This is irritating, especially during the long, grinding missions in the game's latter half. Additionally, whenever you're chasing someone or being chased, you almost always have to deal with teams of disposable thugs who bash you around and riddle you with bullets, and destroying one only means a replacement will zoom in seconds later. Far less frustrating are the on-foot missions, which are standard, over-the-shoulder shooting sprees that use an intuitive cover system.

The plot behind the action is disappointingly flat, as Diesel/Milo runs jobs and deadpans one-liners to ingratiate himself with Barcelona's three rival crime families. Meanwhile, Barcelona itself is weirdly empty, with sparse traffic and only occasional (unhittable) pedestrians. There's not much incentive to explore, either, since you can teleport directly to missions from Milo's map.

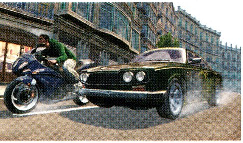
Still, *Wheelman* is enjoyable overall, and the stat-boosting side missions are just interesting enough to give it some replayability. If you're looking for something fast, accessible, and just a little stupid, *Wheelman's* calling your name.

Mikel Reparaz

★★★



The on-foot missions aren't anything special. They're merely...mediocre.



No matter what you drive, your enemies have an irksome ability to keep pace.

Wheelman's Barcelona might be bland, but it's filled with smashables.

Star power: Vin Diesel doesn't just star in *Wheelman*, he also owns Tigon, the game studio that produced it.

Mana Khemia: Student Alliance

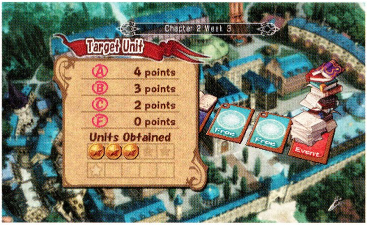
A school RPG that feels too much like school

PSP PRICE: $29.99 ESRB: Everyone 10+ PUBLISHER: NIS America
DEVELOPER: GUST

Answer honestly: Have you ever fantasized about attending a school that teaches magic? If so, *Mana Khemia: Student Alliance* could have been a delightful portable treat for you—if it weren't for the gameplay lag and tired combat system. If you're patient, you *might* be able to overlook the ridiculous load times (downloading parts of the game to your Memory Stick via the Jump Start option helps a *lot).* And you *might* forgive the lethargic turn-based battles (the ability to swap party members and a powerful Burst mode fail to freshen the system). But most people aren't that patient. Which is too bad, because beneath the sluggishness, *Mana Khemia: Student Alliance* offers an absorbing school experience with quirky characters and a fun story.

Teresa Dun

★★★



The PSP version of *Mana Khemia* features a bonus end-dungeon, new recipes, and a multiplayer mode that the PS2 version didn't have.

What "studying" means to aspiring alchemists

TASK 1: Gather raw materials (petals, ores, leather, etc.) from the world.

TASK 2: Synthesize those raw materials into ingredients like flour, cloth, or powder in a quick, reflex-based mini-game. In the process, you imbue properties like attack boost or magic spells into the ingredient.

TASK 3: Athanorize ("craft," in human terms) several of those ingredients together to create weapons, armor, and accessories. The stat bonuses in those items are a blend of whatever properties you earned in Task 2.

TASK 4: Not only will your created goods help you in battle, they'll also unlock abilities in your "Grow Book," which is *Mana Khemia's* form of leveling up. For an alchemist, life revolves around alchemy (not combat).

Tenchu: Shadow Assassins

You're not slick enough to be a ninja

PSP PRICE: $39.99 ESRB: Mature
PUBLISHER: Ubisoft DEVELOPER: From Software/Acquire

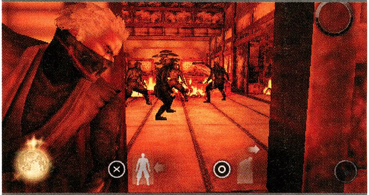
Ninjas are cool. They sneak through shadows. They throw ninja stars. They can slice an enemy's throat before their presence is detected. Wait, restart. Ninjas are *supposed* to be cool. But when a poor control scheme and an even worse camera system make it difficult to perform even one of the three activities mentioned above, they're anything but.

In the third-person *Tenchu: Shadow Assassins,* you play as a ninja. Each stage is supposedly a somewhat open world that contains several possible stealthy pathways. You could climb the rafters, for example, or sneak through bushes, blowing out torches to create more shadows to hide in. But, when both your movement and your camera are controlled by the same button (the analog nub), even seeing what's right next to you becomes a problem, let alone what potential paths there might be above, behind, or below you. Much of the time, you end up walking straight into an enemy.

When that happens, you're forced to flawlessly complete a mini-game where you swipe the analog nub in the direction the screen shows. Easier said than done. However, the few times you do manage to sneak through a section without being seen (after several failed attempts, of course), it feels great. Cool. Like you're a ninja. But most of the time, you end up feeling like a clumsy, frustrated oaf.

Teresa Dun

★★½



You can't pan the camera without moving your character along with it, which makes trying to sneak past these guys a pain.

METAL GEAR ONLINE

Playing with *MEME*'s Special Characters

MGO's special characters are the lesser-sung features of the expansion packs, playing second fiddle to the new battlefields. Most players train their online personas with preferred skills, and *MGO's* special characters come with fixed, prefab skills and weaknesses. To make sure you're fully prepared to take these new characters into combat, we've collected tactical overviews of Mei Ling and Liquid Ocelot (both included with the *MEME* expansion). Get comfortable with these characters to find new *MGO* strategies, which you can then add to your regular soldier's playbook.

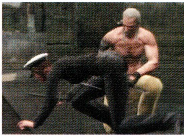
MEI LING: Remote Captain

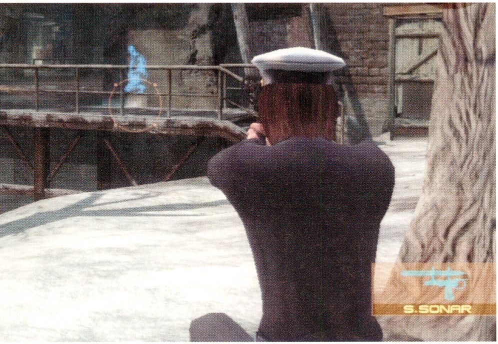
Playing as Mei Ling is the ultimate test of how well you know *MGO.* Some would also call her proof that, yes, there is such a thing as too much fan service. All of *MGO's* special characters have unique qualities that strong players use to their advantage, and a successful strategy for Mei Ling actually uses her status as *"Metal Gear*-series eye-candy" to full tactical effect—as well as working around her limits on the battlefield.

Mei Ling's weapons closet lacks the carbines, rifles, and shotguns that few *MGO* vets spawn without. Instead, Mei Ling can call an airstrike from the USS Missouri, pack one of five sidearms, and carry one of *MGO's* non-lethal support weapons.

» Don't bother shaking down a KO'd enemy for his AK. Anything that Mei Ling steals will show in her inventory, but she can't equip standard weapons missing from her weapons closet.

» She isn't equipped to defend herself in a fistfight, either. Her CQC ends with a pratfall; she doesn't carry a knife; and she lacks all but the most basic punch-kick combo for hand-to-hand combat. She can perform the standard *MGO* forward roll, and, while her punch-kick combo drains takes a full stamina bar down to one-fifth,





The Soliton Sonar Gun appears farthest left in the middle row of Mei Ling's weapons locker. It looks like a sidearm, but don't be fooled: it won't deal damage. Press L1 to ready the device and to use it. Unlike every other weapon with a target circle in *MGO,* nothing more needs done to activate the Sonar Gun after it's been readied.

it's so slow that it's unreliable in emergencies. **The moral:** if you take Mei Ling to the front lines alone, expect a quick return to your spawn area.

- Mei Ling plays best as a support character. She can provide two kinds of support to her team's ground unit: close-range intel with the Soliton Sonar Gun or long-range air support with the USS Missouri.

- To score your team some close-range intel in urban stages such as Ambush Alley or Winter Warehouse, keep Mei Ling in the middle of your ground patrol. (She'll need their protection) Equip her Sonar Gun and pan along the nearby surrounding walls. If there's an enemy on the other side, and if Mei Ling's target clips where he's hiding, then his position will appear on both *MGO's* overhead radar and through team's SOP network. None of this works unless she's connected to her team's SOP network, though, so remember to hook up!

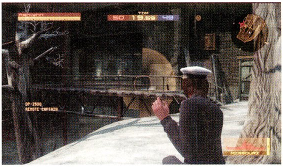
- Mei Ling can also revive knocked-out comrades quickly, though not as quickly as Meryl can. Use her quick-wake ability to revive as many sleeping members of your ground patrol as possible before your enemies return.

- Mei Ling can also provide close-range intel using the Super Scan Plug, the device that comes with *MGO's* new Scanner EX skill. Mei Ling can't perform CQC, but the S.S. Plug lets her hack the other team's SOP network by poking a KO'd (but not dead) enemy. Connect to your team's SOP network and use Mei Ling to keep your ground unit well informed.

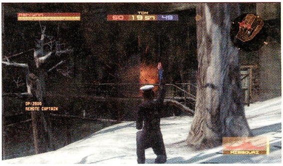
- Like a Magazine trap, Mei Ling's salute will bedazzle anyone within a radius of three *MGO* grunts standing shoulder-to-shoulder. If you hold the triangle button and maintain the pose, Mei Ling's paramours will ogle for a longer period of time. Tactically, this can be used in game modes such as CAP and BASE to stall your opponents on their own turf while your reinforcements arrive. Just remember that Mei Ling's salute affects your teammates as well. A badly timed flirt can turn your gang of mercenaries into a lovely headshot bouquet.

- Position Mei Ling somewhere high in the level to get the most out of the Missouri. She can position the blast radius over any distance, but firing from within a building can lead to a quick suicide. If you place the target on the ceiling directly above Mei Ling, the bombs will hit that exact spot—not the roof of the building and not the floor overhead. The Missouri will only give Mei Ling what she asks, so be sure to use it where you can control the mortars.

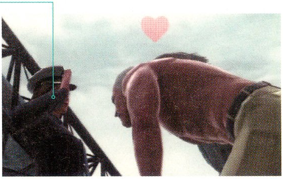
- Players controlling Mei Ling have a special advantage in TSNE matches. Because she doesn't use CQC, she doesn't carry a knife, making her completely invisible while moving with a Stealth suit equipped.

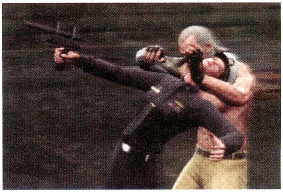


The USS Missouri is Mei Ling's special primary weapon. Hold L1 to make the blast area appear for the Missouri's bombs. Once you've placed the blast area where you want, tap R1 to order the guns to fire.

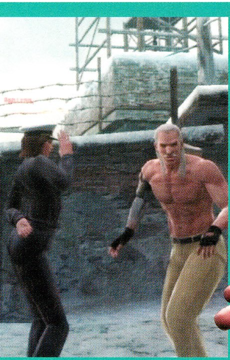


First-time Mei Ling players tend to spam the Missouri's artillery and, worse, slay half of their own team immediately with Friendly Fire. Until newcomers get more experience directing the Missouri's blast area, they're better off holding back and assuming that someone on their team will die when the Missouri fires. Practice with Mei Ling in the Training Lobby before you take her into the field.



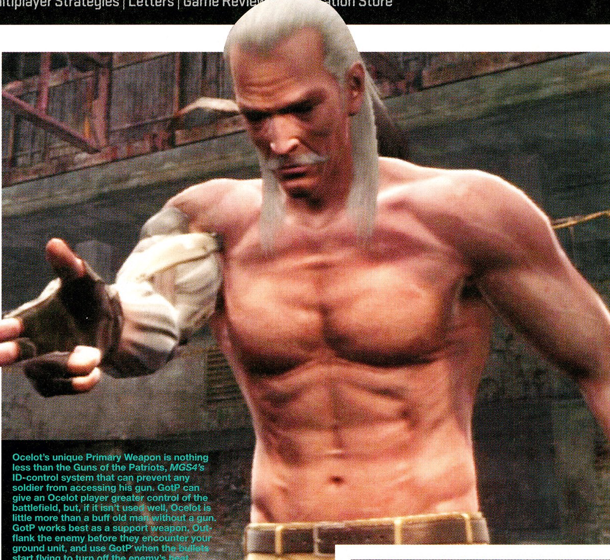


Mei Ling's outfit serves as poor camouflage against any background. The black naval uniform reveals her location in bright areas, and, even when blending into dark backgrounds, her white cap shows your opponent where to place an easy headshot. Play Mei Ling like you would play Solid Snake from *MGS* one: use walls for cover, alcoves for hiding, and the cardboard box for blending into an open environment.

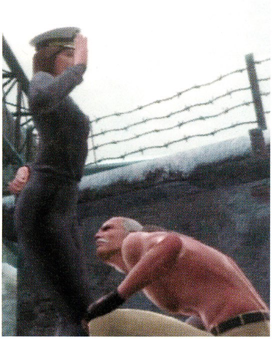


MEI LING EASTER EGGS

Mei Ling has two easter eggs that hearken back to her earliest appearances in the *MGS* series. When she kills an enemy, she'll recite a Chinese proverb (as she did before saving Snake's game in *MGS* one), and her idling animation comes straight from her cameo in the Photography Mode of *MGS* one's expansion *Metal Gear Solid: VR Missions.*



Ocelot's unique Primary Weapon is nothing less than the Guns of the Patriots, *MGS4's* ID-control system that can prevent any soldier from accessing his gun. GotP can give an Ocelot player greater control of the battlefield, but, if it isn't used well, Ocelot is little more than a buff old man without a gun. GotP works best as a support weapon. Outflank the enemy before they encounter your ground unit, and use GotP when the bullets start flying to turn off the enemy's heat.



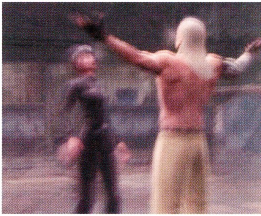
Snake reacts to Mei Ling's salute too. If you think you know his general location, run to the spot and strike a pose. You'll hear the trademark "!" alert sound effect if Snake is nearby, and you'll stall him slack-jawed and drooling. Snake can CQC Mei Ling during the one second she takes to strike her pose, so try rolling forward to knock him down. Stand beside him and salute as he's getting back to his feet.

LIQUID OCELOT: Guns of the Patriots

Liquid Ocelot's strengths fit better into an aggressive player's battleplan. His weapons locker offers any gun that the host hasn't blocked, and he starts with Level 3 skills for almost all guns. Players will get the most out of him by knowing how to use his unique abilities.

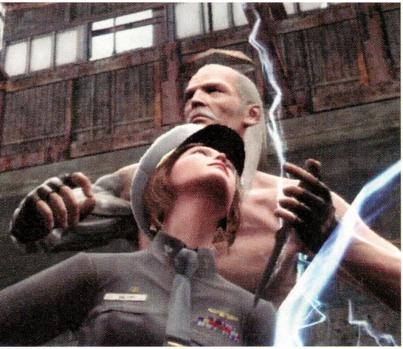
» Like Mei Ling, Ocelot camouflages poorly, especially in dark areas. Though he's well suited for the front-line, his visibility can reveal the position of an otherwise well-camouflaged ground unit. Have Ocelot run ahead as a scout, lag behind, or flank your team's main squad.

» If you press R2 with GotP equipped, Ocelot will pause, fake shooting his temple, and emit a short-range field that disables all nearby enemies, much like a Base match's SOP Destab. Ocelot is open to headshots both right before and after the GotP Destab, so be certain that you've either got someone laying cover fire or that the Destab blast disables everyone close enough to attack.



» Even if a wall separates Ocelot from his enemies, the GotP Destab will disable them as long as they're in range. The buildings in the *MEME* stage Sunset Silo, for example, are great hiding places for launching GotP Destabs.

» Ocelot can give his team a second chance at victory at the end of a losing round. Players cannot manually trigger this ability like the GotP Destab, however, and it only occurs under certain conditions. The match must have team-based rules (such as in TDM or SNE), the round must end with a time-over, Ocelot's team must be losing, and Ocelot must die immediately



Ocelot's CQC is slightly more powerful than Old Snake's, and, if used with GotP, it can make Ocelot a powerhouse during TSNE matches. Ocelot's CQC knife will disappear with a Stealth suit equipped if you ready Ocelot's GotP hand by holding L1. (This makes him the only character besides Mei Ling who can move invisibly.) Use GotP to disable an enemy's gun and then CQC him cold.

before the timer runs out. If all of these conditions are met, then Ocelot will automatically stand, wag his finger, inform all players that running down the timer "won't work this time," and add one minute to the clock.

- Use Ocelot's GotP Destab at the top of ladders or where enemies are holding onto ledges. They'll take damage from the long drop, after which they'll still have to wait for the Destab's effects to pass. It also affects anyone hiding in dumpsters. They'll climb out before falling on their knees, giving Ocelot's teammates an extended window of opportunity for a headshot.

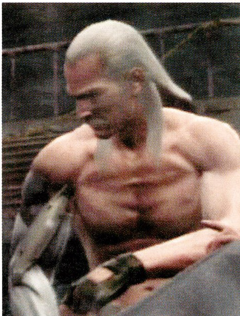
- Ocelot's special THOR handgun is even more powerful than Meryl's special Desert Eagle. Its FPV sight helps with precise shooting, and it will deplete five-sixth of a full life bar after hitting any part of the body. Like the close range shotgun, it will stagger enemies when fired with Autolock or knock them down when fired from over-the-shoulder view.

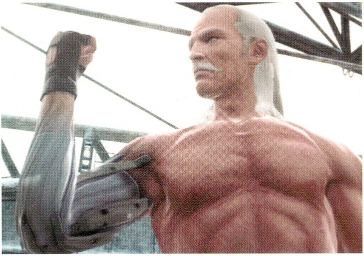
LIQUID OCELOT: Easter Eggs

Kojima Productions showed Liquid Ocelot a lot of love for his *MGO* debut. As arguably the most developed character in the series, his *MGO* easter eggs chronicle everything from the villain's youth in *MGS3* to his twilight in *MGS4.* (Caveat: the following list contains spoilers for several games in the *Metal Gear Solid* series.)

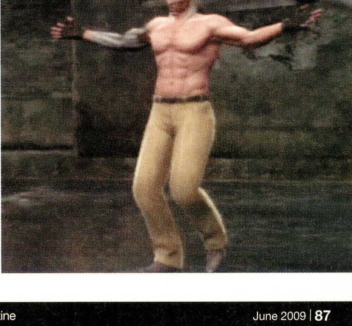
- Ocelot's THOR handgun ties three *MGS*-series references into a single weapon. The gun forces Ocelot to reload after each shot, recalling his boast from *MGS* one that he "loves to reload on the battlefield." Second, each round is manually reload into the firing chamber, recalling the mistake that nearly cost him his life when he faced Naked Snake in *MGS3.* Finally, the gun's name itself—THOR, the Norse god of thunder—recalls Ocelot's old association with Volgin, AKA "Thunderbolt," whose sadistic use of electricity inspired Ocelot's love for high voltage torture.

- Old Snake and Ocelot have a lot of bad blood between them, and the *MEME* expansion keeps the tension alive through their interactions during SNE matches. If Ocelot catches Snake with either of his GotP attacks, he'll throw out an exclamation point and yell Snake's name.

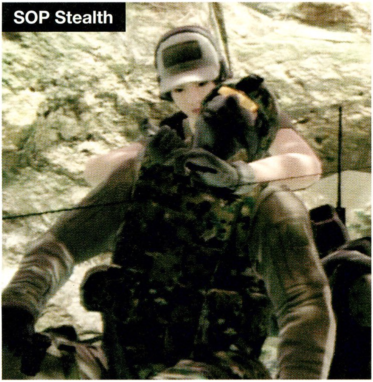




Ocelot produces a clenched fist (as he did when possessed by Liquid's arm in *MGS2)* during a standing salute, and he flourishes a single-handed version of Young Ocelot's hand gesture when saluting in motion. The standing salute will continue to connect teammates as they pass by, but it leaves Ocelot open to an easy headshot, so only perform it behind cover.



Few *Metal Gear* moments are as memorable as when Ocelot points at Old Snake, laughs like an adolescent bully, and skips away at the end of *MGS4's* fourth act. To relive the jeer in *MGO,* press L1 to ready Ocelot's weapon, tilt back on the Left-analog stick, and hold down the X button. Be careful, though: Ocelot won't grab any ledge that he steps over during this animation, opening the door to an unexpected death.


SOP Stealth

Shield+

- » If Ocelot catches Snake in a CQC hold, press the Triangle button to apply the Stun Knife. While the electric discharge normally affects Ocelot's prey alone, high voltage will envelope Ocelot as well, recalling Old Snake's torture at the end of *MGS4's* third act.
- » If Old Snake kills Ocelot in *MGO,* Ocelot will mutter the first compliment he gave to Snake in *MGS* one and to Big Boss in *MGS3,* as well as his parting words in *MGS4:* "You're pretty good."

GENE X MEME:
Mixing up Special Characters

If you host matches, try combining special characters from both expansions rather than pitting only Johnny vs. Meryl or Ocelot vs. Mei Ling. Meryl's well-rounded combat skills present a more even match against Ocelot, and Johnny's lack of nanomachines makes him immune to any GotP attacks. Mei Ling has tactical advantages over Meryl and Johnny. Meryl connects more easily to her team's SOP network, making her a prime target for Mei Ling's S.S. Plug, and, while Johnny goes undetected by the Sonar gun, Mei Ling's salute will keep him enraptured longer than anyone else.

New Skills

SOP STEALTH: This skill prevents enemies from reading your SOP data. Its effectiveness depends upon the level of your opponent's SOP skills. Monomania and Scanner will only be blocked if your SOP Stealth level matches (or exceeds) your attacker's level for those skills. Any level of SOP Stealth renders Enemy Locator Grenades useless.

The enemy's Narc skill level weakens by one level for every degree that you've leveled SOP Stealth. Let's assume, for example, that you have Level 1 SOP Stealth. Level 3 Narc will only work as effectively as Level 2 Narc, while Level 2 Narc will only work as well as Level 1 Narc.

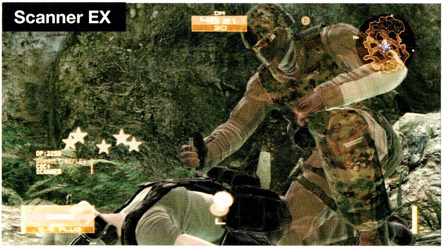
SOP Stealth is ideal for RES and TSNE matches, where SOP data can mean the difference between victory and defeat. It's also useful for your ground unit's point man in TDM, as it can prevent his giving away an ambush if he's caught and scanned.

SCANNER EX: The regular Scanner skill equips your soldier with a Scan Plug that only works when poked into an enemy caught with CQC. Scanner EX gives you a Super Scan Plug that can hook into unconscious hostages. Crouch over a sleeping enemy, press Triangle with the S.S. Plug equipped, and you'll siphon all the info he's got.

The skill comes with sticker shock, though. To get Scanner EX, you need to perform 200 scans with Level 3 Scanner. A Level 3 scan lasts 90 seconds, and the game only registers each unique scan, meaning you'll need to wait for the first scan to end before starting another. To earn the skill quickly, try performing Level 3 scans during game modes with a lot of respawning, such as TDM, DM, and Base matches. Besides keeping you supplied with fresh prey, players in these game modes are less likely to equip SOP Stealth (which will waste your effort).

Scanner EX is worth the heavy time investment. An enemy team with high levels of SOP Stealth equipped can wreck your team's scanning strategy in RES and TSNE modes. Scanner EX is the only hacking skill that can bypass Level 3 SOP Stealth.

SHIELD+: Higher Shield+ levels enable faster running with the Shield and decreases the time needed after attacking with the Shield to attack again. It's a necessity for players serving as escorts in CAP matches since crouching with the Shield+ will clear out Claymores without damage. It doesn't increase the damage dealt by a Shield smash, but it helps you get closer to an armed enemy faster, making your portable fortress even more portable than before. ■


Scanner EX

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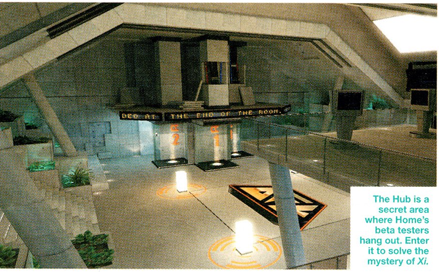
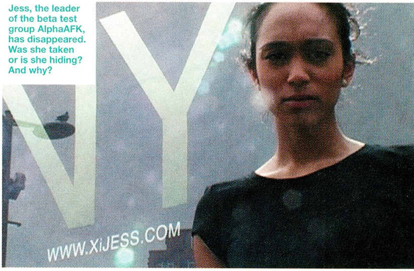
PlayStation Network Games

A mystery unfolds on Home: Quest and play games to help uncover the truth behind *Xi.*



The Hub is a secret area where Home's beta testers hang out. Enter it to solve the mystery of *Xi.*



Jess, the leader of the beta test group AlphaAFK, has disappeared. Was she taken or is she hiding? And why?

Xi A real-life mystery (almost)

You may have heard of ARGs. Alternate Reality Games are when a "game" poses as real-life events and takes place in real-time, with clues and puzzles often embedded in "real" mediums like websites, billboards, email, even phone calls, and so on. It's supposed to feel, well, *real,* and the PlayStation Home now has it's very own ARG, called *Xi.* To join in, inspect the weird graffiti on the wall behind you when you zone into Home's Central Plaza...

Odd happenings

You'll be ported to the Hub, one of several "secret" new game spaces in Home. Once there, you'll learn that the Hub is actually a private area where a group of Home's original beta testers—an online clan called AlphaAFK—hangs out while they work.

However, the leader of AlphaAFK (a girl named Jess) suddenly goes missing while working on a secret side project that she called "Xi." The rest of the clan starts to feel as if they're being watched. And then, weird glitches start popping up all over Home. So, AlphaAFK opens the floodgates to allow us "noobs" into their territory, hoping we can help them find Jess and solve the mystery of *Xi.*

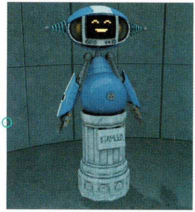
New games!

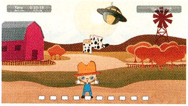
As you dive into the mystery, you have a few main goals. First, keep up to date on all the goings-on of AlphaAFK (visit alphaafk.com and jess247.com daily, and check the Hub message board to see what's been updated). You'll find conversations between the members of AlphaAFK, videos posted mysteriously by Jess, and other odd clues that progress the story.

Second, you need to earn Fragments, which can be done by playing in various mini-games, both in Home and through your web browser (which you can do on your PS3). For example, there's a *Maximum Tilt* game that is similar to a motorcycle racing game you'd find at an arcade, as well as an old-school text-based adventure called *Caverns of the Bandit King.* A new space called Hexopolis also lets you race to finish six simple mini-games as fast as you can.

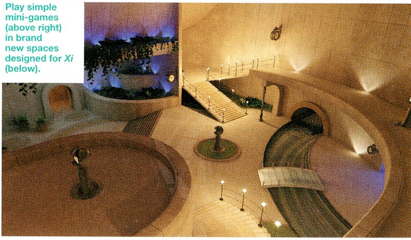
Third, check in with the Hub's friendly robot, Stapler, who'll give you Expeditions (quests) that require community brainwork to solve. This unlocks Butterflies, which Jess has scattered throughout Home for some reason. You'll need to do real research to figure these out.

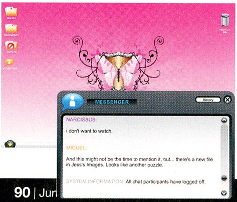
When the community makes enough progress, new game spaces unlock and more clues about *Xi* are revealed. *Xi's* also free. So even if you're not into sleuthing, go check out the amusing mini-games.





Play simple mini-games (above right) in brand new spaces designed for *Xi* (below).





NARCISSUS:

i don't want to watch.

MIGUEL:

And this might not be the time to mention it, but... there's a new file in Jess's Images. Looks like another puzzle.

SYSTEM INFORMATION: All chat participants have logged off.

PSN Video Download Service

Reno 911's Ben Garant contemplates the comedic potential of pulling people over on the information superhighway.

Comedy Central hit show *Reno 911!* arrives on PSN

All six seasons of Comedy Central's hilarious *COPS* spoof *Reno 911!* are now available on PSN's video download service. The first five seasons are currently available in full, while season six—which just began airing—will be assembled one episode at a time as the season progresses. We spoke with the writer, director, star, and executive producer of the show, Ben Garant—better known as Deputy Travis Junior—who provided some tips on his favorite episodes to watch and what to expect from the new season.

PTOM: Are there any episodes that you're particularly proud of that that someone who maybe hasn't seen the show before should check out?
Ben Garant: I think it's like season one, there's an episode where Oscar Nunez—and it was before he was on *The Office*—came in as a Homeland Security officer. It's like a back-to-back, two-part episode where—as an officer for Homeland security—he's trying to show us the ropes and how to prepare Reno for some kind of terrorist attack. And it's, I think, one of the funniest performances I've ever seen on TV. I think up until this season, that's my favorite episode, the Homeland Security episode.

What can you tell us about season six?
It's our best season by far. We have two new deputies: Joe Lo Truglio, who's from *The State* and tons of stuff, and Ian Roberts, who's one of the *Upright Citizens Brigade* and just the funniest improv guy on the planet, he's so good. So they're our two new cops, and it's just brought new life to the show. I feel like season five was our best one—like we figured it out in season five, like it finally became the show it was supposed to be. And I think this season it's even better. It's...oh it's a dumb, dumb, dumb show. [laughs]

Your show's had some pretty amazing guest stars in the past. Who can we expect to see this season?
This season was really good. We're starting to get people who have heard of the show and come to us. Like, this season, we have Jonah Hill and Craig Robinson from *Pineapple Express* and all those movies... George Lopez now loves doing the show, so he came back and did the show again. This year Carmen Elektra did a thing, and Rainn Wilson, we have a whole show with Rainn Wilson. And he's great! It was really, really funny.

For more of our interview with Deputy Travis, check back next month when we'll discuss glass eyeballs, getting out of speeding tickets, killer hangovers, and potential concepts for a *Reno 911!* videogame. ■

Letters

Feedback, Insight, Brown-nosing, and Penny-pinching

In response to our "Holiday Horror Story" question...

9

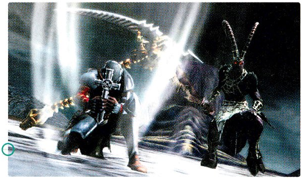
Number of people whose PS3 died just days before or after Christmas

12

Number of people who received the absolute wrong items

1

Number of people who knocked over his flat-screen TV while trying to set up his brand new PS3, destroying both the TV and PS3 in the process



By the way, as excited as we may be for *Dante's Inferno,* our 150 New Games feature wasn't meant to imply any particular order or preference.

SMOLDERING RAGE

In your April 2009 issue, you ranked your third most anticipated game as *Dante's Inferno.* I could not disagree more. I will spare the details for the sake of brevity, but I find this game more of an insult to Dante than homage to him. To say it is based on the writings of Dante is wrong on so many levels, the least of which is that Dante is now a demon-slaying barbarian instead of a poet. My biggest fear for this game is that it will encourage people to read the *Divine Comedy,* but boredom will set in due to its complete lack of gore and violence. I love this story so much that I have studied it both in English and in the original Latin Vulgate. It pains me to see such a bastardization brought into fruition.

Sean, via email

You meant Italian, right? The language in which *The Divine Comedy* was originally written? Seeing as you've studied it and all (and since the Latin Vulgate is a version of the Bible, not a language)...but our petty cheap shots aside, lighten up dude! Sure the developers are taking a few "creative liberties" with the source material, but they're doing so in the name of making a fun game. Just relax and enjoy—or if you really can't, just ignore it and play *God of War* instead. Apparently it's a shockingly accurate depiction of ancient Greece, translated from the original Zapotec (okay, that was one last cheap shot...but not undeserved).

> "When I see that such an amazing series is coming to an end after only its third installment, it actually gives me the utmost confidence in those working on it." >>

LETTER OF THE MONTH

IF YOU LOVE HIM, SET HIM FREE

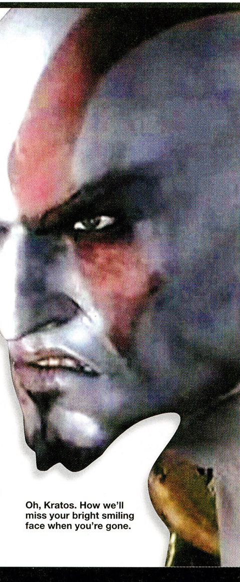
In your April issue, you wrote: "According to Sony, this will be the final game in the *God of War* series...And while this news might seem a bit dismaying, we've got two reasons why this is, in all likelihood, substantially more positive than it may appear. It's entirely possible that it isn't true... Prequels, side stories, any number of different areas in the *GoW* universe could still be explored."

Why promote the idea of another entry in the series? Why care at all right now? Why, when this hasn't even been released yet? I'm as excited about *GoW III* as the next guy (as long as that guy thinks *GoW* is the best action series ever created), but I'm also excited to see it end. The reason I like the franchise is because of the sense that there was a vision from the very beginning; that the developers are striving to attain a point of pure perfection without exploiting its success and selling it out.

When I see that such an amazing series is coming to an end after only its third installment, it actually gives me the utmost confidence in those working on it. I don't want these guys thinking about the future of Kratos. Not only could it hurt the installment they're currently working on, but it could hinder any new epiphanies this proven studio could have in the future towards a new franchise.

Shane, Akron OH

You know what, Shane? You make an excellent point. It's always a shame to see publishers opportunistically exploit a beloved franchise. Nothing kills the magic of a series quite like a crass cash-in, and it'd be a shame to see Kratos go the way of, say, Sonic. But bare in mind that keeping a franchise on life support doesn't have to be a bad thing. Originally, there wasn't supposed to be a *Metal Gear Solid 4,* and clearly that worked out in our favor. Still, in all honesty, we can't wait to see how *God of War* ends either.



Oh, Kratos. How we'll miss your bright smiling face when you're gone.

DUALITY

With more and more diverse games hitting store shelves, I think it's time for the star rankings to be separated by single-player and multiplayer game sub-scores. For example, games such as *Resistance 2* have terrific multiplayer modes, but their single-player campaigns aren't up to *BioShock's* standards. Letters come in each month about players with no Internet connection that are only interested in campaign games while others are drawn to hopping online and spending hours with friends (or complete strangers). I think that having a score for each mode would help inform game buyers who are laying down their hard-earned coin.

Steve Anderson, Dallas, TX

Not a bad idea, Steve. You're totally right that people play games for different reasons, so why not offer scores based on specific interests? Well, we believe a score should reflect the overall value of a product because it's useful to everyone regardless of personal preferences. Plus, there's a very easy way to find out how the quality of both the single and multiplayer portions of a game affected its score: read the review!

Hey, no guns allowed in a tug-of-war!

ALL PLAY AND NO WORK

When I started my job at a local grocery store in my home town, I thought it was going to be like every other lame job that I'd had before: repetitive, dull, and person unfriendly! After getting to know my fellow workers, though, I learned that most of them enjoyed videogames—even my BOSS! Within a month, we had all bought PS3's just so we could play together and do something in our spare time. What I thought was going to be boring turned out to be the best job I ever had. If we're not working, we are at home playing *SOCOM, Killzone 2, Resistance 2,* and anything else that's out to be bought! I have been working here for about two years now, and because of the time that we have had spent playing games, I have avoided so much trouble (since I let my boss kick my ass time and again). Also, the friends I have made actually share my interests and enjoyment in life! Thank you, PlayStation!

Matthew McNamar, via email

Oh man, you get to just hang out and play videogames with your co-workers?! We're super jealous.

MAKES CENTS

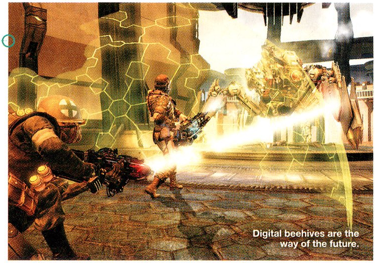
Why not make PSN DLC even dollar amounts?! You know how much I gotta buy to add all those damn pennies up? Too freakin' much! I guess that was the plan. And why are 15-minute shows like *Robot Chicken* $1.99 and 50-minute shows like *Nip/Tuck* also $1.99? I would be more likely to buy short episodes if they were appropriately priced, y'know? Well I should probably go since I'm at work. Thanks again guys!

PegLeg1979, via email

We don't know about you, Peg Leg, but that penny makes a *huge* difference when we're deciding whether or not to buy something. Two whole dollars is a bit too rich for our blood. We're cheap, Peg Leg. Very cheap. Also, *Robot Chicken* and *Nip/Tuck* cost the same amount because...uh, well... umm...

AGE OLD PROBLEM

So I'm 12 years old right now, and I own three M-rated games. I have *CoD4, Assassin's Creed,* and *GTA4*. I've played *CoD4* for a while and want *CoD: World at War,* but my mom says no. I feel I'm mature enough to play M-rated games, but she still says no. I know what war is and what happens (not saying I know what it feels like to be in war) but she still says no. I've seen war movies like *Black Hawk Down, Saving*

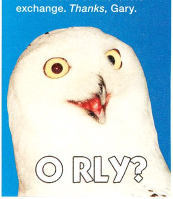

Digital beehives are the way of the future.

The World's Worst Job Interview

The following is a series of emails between editor Scott Butterworth and a reader that we're going to call "Minh T" (partly because that's his name and partly because it sounds like "minty"). Nothing about these emails has been altered.

MINH T: Since Gary is leaving for *PC Gamer*, can I have his job? I'm a PS3 addict and despise Butters.
SCOTT: O rly? What are your qualifications? Love, Butters
MINH T: uhhh. ps3 addict. plays alot of games. godly at rock band (especially guitar). review stuff fair...
MINH T: gary says he refers me...
SCOTT: Any chance I could get that in writing?
MINH T: The drawing you have of Rob on the reviewers page makes him look too good. that messy, cool-looking hair is a comb over in real life. those cool sunglasses should be round harry potter ones instead.
SCOTT: Well you're certainly not going to get Gary's job with an attitude like that, recommendation or not.
MINH T: my apologies to rob
MINH T: so? how about it? frequent gamer, ps3 addict. what more could you ask for in a reviewer?
SCOTT: A basic knowledge of punctuation and capitalization?

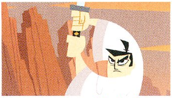
Unfortunately, we didn't hear back from Minh after that one. We did, however, discover that Gary is somehow still on the PTOM Letters mailing list and had indeed sent an encouraging email to Minh in the middle of this whole exchange. *Thanks,* Gary.



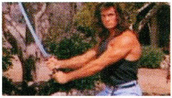
Samurighteous!

Congratulations to Jennifer Foster of Wheelersburg Ohio, who correctly identified the trio of Samurais on the Reviews Intro page of our April issue! Expect some stuff from Rob's desk in the near future. Anyway, here are Jennifer's answers:

"Picture One: Samurai Futaba – This samurai was a John Belushi (SNL) character who was the star of various skits, such as 'Samurai Delicatessen' and 'Samurai Night Fever.'"



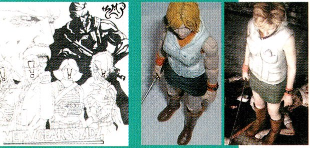
"Picture Two: Samurai Jack – This samurai is the star of Cartoon Network's Samurai Jack cartoon series. Samurai Jack has been banished to the future by his nemesis, Aku, and spends every episode seeking the path home."



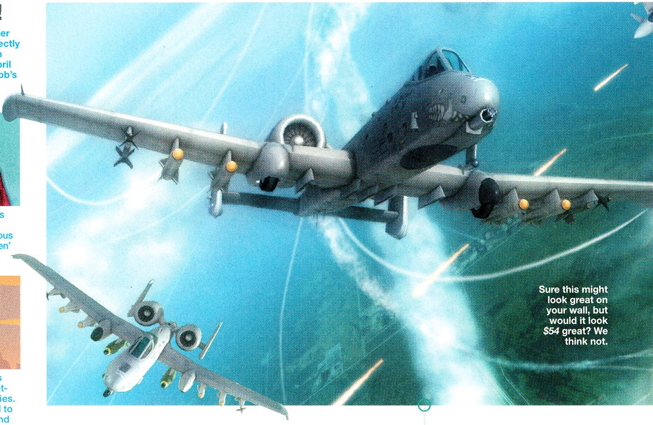
"Picture Three: Samurai Cop – This samurai film has been hailed as one of the worst samurai films ever. Samurai Cop was directed by Amir Shervan and starred Matt Hannon as the samurai cop, Joe Marshall. Joe Marshall is an undercover policeman who has been trained in the ways of the samurai."

This Month in Fan Art!

You know, fan art used to be such a big part of videogame magazines. What ever happened to that? Please send us more! While you work on your own masterpieces, check out the mad artist prowess of Stu Park and Nicholas Wolfwood!



Stu teased that he may have to redo his *MGS4* collage in color, and Nick apparently sculpted this *Silent Hill* figure with a guitar pick!



Sure this might look great on your wall, but would it look *$54* great? We think not.

Private Ryan, the *Rambo* movies, and others but she still says no. What should I do?

Jordan Thierry, via email

Alright, Jordan, here's what you do: first, build a secret laboratory somewhere underneath your parents' house. Or if they have a basement, that's cool too. Just watch out for spiders. Spiders are scary. Next, construct an elaborate, hollow rabbit from plywood and old shoelaces, and be sure to include a few wheels. Probably four, four is a good number of wheels. By the time you're done, you'll probably be old enough to buy games for yourself and you'll have a totally sweet rabbit go-cart. Or you can just listen to your mom, because mom's rule counts. Or just do whatever you did to get those other three games—that should work too.

EXTRA! EXTRA!

Today I was in Best Buy talking to a friend about the *MGS* iPhone article in your April Issue, which had just come out. When we were in the checkout line, I saw the PTOM on the shelf. I grabbed it and proceeded to open to the aforementioned article when all of a sudden it fell open to a poster of *HAWX.* My subscription issue did not have a poster in it. I realize that the store shelf issue is more expensive, but I always thought that they were the same as the subscription issues. What else have we subscribers been missing out on?

Kyle Comeau, Austintown OH

Honestly Kyle, things like that don't happen particularly often, and it's only done as an incentive for potential new readers. So ask yourself this: is the $54 you save each year as a subscriber worth a *HAWX* poster?

NERD PRIDE!

I am a very frustrated gamer. It isn't the games. It is the non-gamers. I hate it when people assume that you are a nerd or a loser when you talk about playing games. It is ridiculous! Games have become one of the leading media industries just like movies and music but for some reason it is "nerdy" or stupid. I hate that! I always have to hesitate when I am talking to a person I haven't met before when they ask me what my hobbies are because I don't want them to look down on me because I am a "nerd." So I was just wondering your opinions on this topic and how we can help solve the ignorance.

Alex, via email

What's wrong with being a nerd?

FREE THINGS SUCK

What's with all the hype for the Trophy system? It seems as though every issue you guys print has Trophy references. The Trophy system is about as exciting as a five-year-old T-ball team getting trophies so they don't get their feelings hurt. First off, why doesn't the Trophy system recognize saved data and award Trophies for missions or tasks already accomplished? By the time Trophies were introduced to *Fallout 3* and *Burnout Paradise,* I had achieved all or many of the Trophy tasks. However, the only way I could achieve these

contact Send your thoughts and comments to PTOM_Letters@futureus.com. Especially for Carlos the Intern—he's sad that no ever writes him.

Trophies was to delete my current save data and start over. Secondly, why are there so many online or multiplayer Trophies? Some poor folks in the boonies still don't have high-speed Internet connections. As of now, the Trophy system is just a wasted icon slot on my XMB. USELESS!

Doyle41, Richmond VA

Yeah, stupid Trophies. We hate when free functionality is added to our games. Take your fun in-game incentives and shove 'em, developers!

WITH FRIENDS LIKE US...

Why didn't you accept my friend request? You accepted my friend request but I never see you online, why?

Everyone, via everything

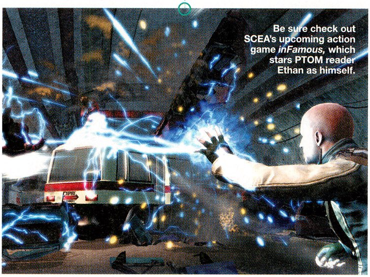
We're very sorry, but our Friend Lists are totally full (yes, there is a limit). We apologize if we didn't add you; we honestly didn't think we'd get so many requests. And to the people who are on our Friend Lists: we're not avoiding you! We're just not on much because we're busy making magazines. It's nothing personal...really!

THE POWER OF PTOM

Ever since reading PTOM, I've had the unusual ability to shoot lightning from my fingertips. Can any of you accomplish this feat?

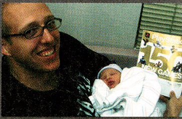
Ethan, via email

PTOM affects everyone in different ways, Ethan. Rob dates supermodels; Scott can walk through walls now; Teresa has laser vision; Roger can grow hair at will (but strangely, not on his head), and Carlos can break down boxes. You get the idea. Congratulations on the lightning fingers, though. That's a good one.



Be sure check out SCEA's upcoming action game *inFamous,* which stars PTOM reader Ethan as himself.

The PSP World Tour Continues!



Ok, so that's not a PSP, but Michael Vandyken definitely deserves some recognition for this!

Here's Hakung Wong and his PSP enjoying the NFL Pro Bowl in Hawaii. Pretty baller.

Our very own Teresa Dun shows off her PSP to a couple *FF XIII* devs in Tokyo. Yay Japan!

Summer's Coming!

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Time to get
Next Generation
with your gaming?

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Game Trialz is giving away all of the Nex Generation gaming consoles to one lucky member! Drawing will take place on July 4th, 2009.

One Grand Prize
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You must be a member to qualify

All 5 Nex-Generation Consoles
One lucky winner!

- No Registration needed - if you are a member, you are already entered to win!
- Must Join Game Trialz prior to contest - July 4, 2009

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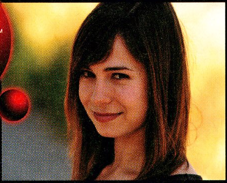


Qore host Veronica Belmont

QORE EPISODE 10

Featuring Burnout Paradise: Big Surf Island, The Chronicles of Riddick: Assault on Dark Athena, and Alpha Protocol

Qore goes global once again this month, with trips to Sweden and the UK rounding out our Stateside coverage! Plus, we venture back into the world of *LittleBigPlanet* to figure out how the most creative community minds built their levels.

Burnout Paradise: Big Surf Island
One of our favorite racing games will soon receive an expansion pack known as Big Surf Island. Our UK correspondent, Katers, takes a ride with Criterion Games to the new area specially designed to let players catch big air. She also takes us on a behind-the-scenes tour of their expansive studio.

The Chronicles of Riddick: Assault on Dark Athena
Five years ago, Starbreeze Studios created a great game from the Vin Diesel film. The Qore team travels to Sweden to report on the sequel's development, and find out if Starbreeze will strike gold once again.

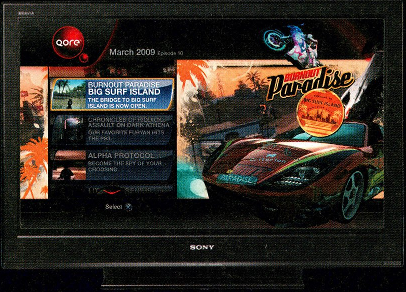
Alpha Protocol
Is it an action/espionage adventure? Is it an RPG? It's both! This ambitious title from Obsidian puts players into the role of an inexperienced but resourceful agent. We visit the development team for an early look at SEGA's upcoming game.

LittleBigGenius
Have you ever wondered how some of your favorite *LittleBigPlanet* levels are created? Qore tracked down the man behind one of the most "hearted" levels—The Azure Palace—to learn how it was done. Plus a look at some of our other favorite user-created levels.

Don't miss the **"What's Hot"** section for Qorespondent Audrey Cleo as she reveals some of the big-name Blu-ray movie releases that you can watch on your PS3.

Alpha Protocol

Burnout Paradise: Big Surf Island



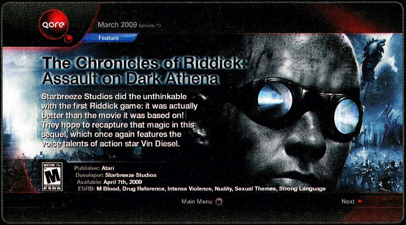
March 2009 Episode 10

BURNOUT PARADISE
BIG SURF ISLAND
THE BRIDGE TO BIG SURF ISLAND IS NOW OPEN.

CHRONICLES OF RIDDICK: ASSAULT ON DARK ATHENA
OUR FAVORITE FURYAN HITS THE PS3.

ALPHA PROTOCOL
BECOME THE SPY OF YOUR CHOOSING.

The Chronicles of Riddick: Assault on Dark Athena



March 2009 Episode 10

Feature

The Chronicles of Riddick: Assault on Dark Athena

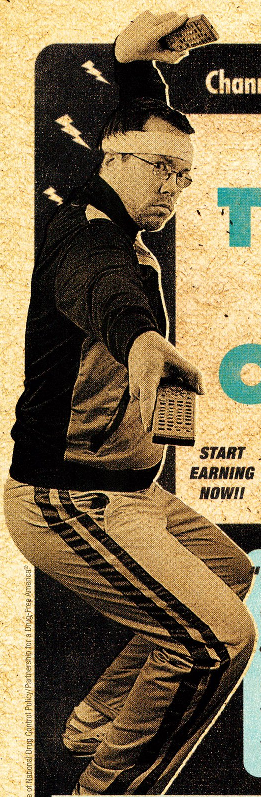
Starbreeze Studios did the unthinkable with the first Riddick game: it was actually better than the movie it was based on! They hope to recapture that magic in this sequel, which once again features the voice talents of action star Vin Diesel.

Publisher: Atari
Developer: Starbreeze Studios
Available: April 7th, 2009
ESRB: M Blood, Drug Reference, Intense Violence, Nudity, Sexual Themes, Strong Language

Photograph by Mark Madeo.

TO REDEEM YOUR CODE: On your PS3's PlayStation Network tab, select Account Management, then select Redeem Codes. Enter the code below into the three boxes, then select Continue. Now hit Continue and Accept the download. Sit back and enjoy!

DGBC-J2BH-E99Q



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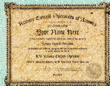
"COLLEGE CAN TAKE *up to* FOUR LONG YEARS... YUCK!"

NO TALENT NEEDED!

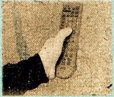


Remote Control Operators of America

Your Name Here

TV Remote Control Operator

FREE DIPLOMA!



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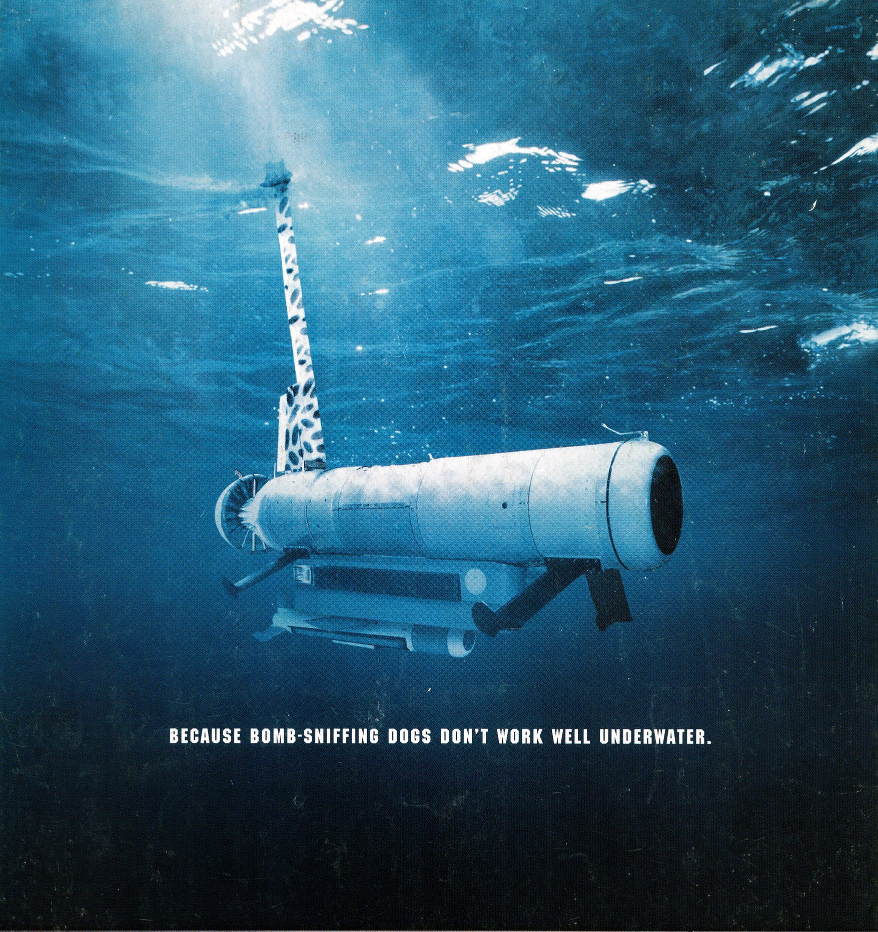
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